Duchamp and Pragmatics

Kiam Loong Daniel Lai
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by

Lai Kiam Loong (Daniel)

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School of the Arts

Department of Art and Design

Dr. Geoffrey W. Newman
Dean, School of the Arts

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Anne Betts /J. Weinshenker
Thesis Sponsor

Dr. Susie Colin
Committee Member

Dr. Longxing Wei
Committee Member

Baby Murphy
Department Chair
Abstract

There is a correspondence between the mechanism of visual communication in Duchamp’s art and the principles of pragmatics in linguistics. The process from Duchamp’s intended meaning encoded in his art to the correct interpretation on the part of the addressee is similar to the process in which intended meaning encoded in speech being accurately decoded by the addressee. This is because the correct interpretation in both processes involves inferences. Be it language or art, to fully understand the intended meaning of a statement, an addressee must first understand the natural meaning known as entailment; and subsequently uncover the unnatural, but intended, meaning known as implicature. Uncovering the implicature requires some inferences to be drawn. For addresser to make sure that the intended but implied meaning will be successfully inferred and for addressee to draw appropriate inferences, mutually shared contextual knowledge is required. As a result, the theoretical explanations from the perspective of pragmatics used to account for language use and its comprehension are also adequately applicable to the interpretation of art.
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In his essay written in 1973, Marcel Duchamp developed a theory in art appreciation, especially in connection with his own art. He believed that art should be read, deciphered, and interpreted as language was construed. He claimed that "painting[s] should not be exclusively retinal or visual; it should also have to do with the grey matter, with our urge for understanding."\(^1\) To Duchamp, the concept of understanding was a phenomenon of ephemera. When the definition of a form of art had been achieved, meaning that label was assigned to a group of art, e.g. Dadaism, he negated that definition by means of anti-art. "Art," as he put it, "was a habit forming drug."\(^2\) In the early 50's, he analogized chess playing to art appreciation. In fact, chess was what painting ought to be because paintings, although their form was visual on the surface, were really constructed by something else – mental cause. "There is a mental end implied when you look at the formation of the pieces on the board. The transformation of the visual aspect to the grey matter is what always happens in chess, and what should happen in art."\(^3\) At a banquet of the New York State Association of Chess in 1952, Duchamp described the full dimension to view chess playing was to view it as a kind of poetry, both malleable and mental at

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\(^2\) Marcel Duchamp, *Apropos of 'Readymades', the Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 142.

the same time. He claimed that beauty in chess resembled the beauty of poetry. Like the arrangement of chess pieces on a checker board in a chess game, poetry shaped thoughts, in the form of phonology or alphabetical blocks.

The chess game when looked at as an “image” by one who knew the rules of the game, could be deciphered because, resembling a painting, the chess game offered more to the thought than to the eye. And if the “image” was looked at by one who did not know the rules of the game, the meaning would cease to exist. Consequently, to this person the chess game offered less to the thought than to the eye. There was a kind of mechanism in a chess game to be read, interpreted, and understood by the viewer (who knew the rules), resembling the mechanism in a painting. At the moment of stagnancy, namely in between turns, to an expert, outcomes ranging from the potential next move of any given player to the chances of winning or losing for any given player became apparent. While equating the extraction of meaning from a chess game to decoding the meaning in a painting, Duchamp called this meaning an “abstract image akin to [the] poetic idea of writing” and an “ideographic execution” of an image. This is to say that since the understanding of words and sentences in poetry, (similar to the snapshot of a chess game), involves thoughts and familiarity with language rules, (similar to those of chess games), to decipher the meaning in art analogously involves a great deal of productive thoughts and a high degree of contextual awareness.

4 The same interpretation was also given by Hubert Damisch, “The Duchamp Defense,” October, Vol. 10, MIT Press, (Autumn,) 1979, 10.
5 Damisch, 10
On the basis stated above, it is imaginable to say that Duchamp was anti-modernist because modernism asserted that art was a meta-aesthetic (self-reflexive) phenomenon and a purely optical experience. (This will be more apparent when we discuss Greenbergian Modernism under Literature Review.) He additionally related art appreciation to ideographic interpretation, which in turn meant similarity to language processing in the mind. Ideogrammatic interpretation is a linguistic undertaking because an ideogram is a picture or symbol, or a series of them, used in a system of writing to represent a thing or an idea but not a particular word or phrase for it, such as Chinese characters and Egyptian hieroglyphs. Duchamp’s interest in linguistics and punning, as well as phonetic games, is apparent in his art. Although he was not known to be a linguist, his familiarity with the principles of linguistics was part of the success of Duchamp’s art. Therefore, the following will be the main focus of this paper discussed in terms of the theoretical frameworks of pragmatics:

1. his anti-establishment sentiment (e.g. not wanting to be associated with any group or movement of art,)
2. his advocacy of linguistics in visual art expressed in the form of paintings and readymades,
3. the linguistic strategies in which he engaged.
1.1 On Pragmatics

Pragmatics is concerned with the understanding of linguistic meaning in context. Simply put, pragmatics deals with, firstly, the mechanism of the addressee encoding an intended meaning and conveying it with a certain preferred means of expression, and secondly, the addressee decoding that expression and finally understanding that said intended meaning. This mechanism of pragmatics involves two kinds of contexts – linguistic context and situational context. Linguistic context refers to the structural arrangement of language items that takes place before a sentence or phrase is to be successfully interpreted. In other words, such context offers raw meanings preceding the correct interpretation that requires situational context. For example, the linguistic context of the sentence

\textit{Apparently, this work is anti-art.}

is that there is a piece of work physically close to the speaker; the art object is not agreeing to the established notion of what art should look like; and he/she finds that disagreement to be obvious. However, the complete, intended meaning is essentially not interpretable without situational context. The situational context involves knowledge of what \textit{this work} refers to, the conventionally institutionalized notion of what art is, and lastly, what elements embodied in \textit{this work} that constitute the "anti," or the means by which the artist expressed his/her disagreement. We cannot say \textit{x} is not \textit{y} without mutually

\footnote{Robert Rodman and Victoria Fromkin, \textit{An Introduction to Language} (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 190}
agreeing what y is, or, at least, what characteristics y should have. In the
absence of any information listed above, the addressee will fail to correctly
understand the addresser's intended meaning. The next sentence

By comparing readymades with other contemporary sculptures
and paintings that corresponded with the idea of art of the old school,
apparently, this work is anti-art.

suggests that knowledge of the art world, or situational context, has to be
present in order to successfully decipher the meaning. In other words, the
addressee and addresser must establish a common ground, namely the
contemporary art world's understanding of art and anti-art, so that the dialogue
could function as a linguistic interaction. This common ground is known as
indexicality. Indexicality refers to the encoding of perspective, or points of
reference, in relation to the speaker and the time and place of the statement
made. The hearer has to reconstruct this perspective from the viewpoint of the
speaker. When this reconstruction takes place, the intersubjectivity established
will be a kind of common ground, which is shared by both addresser and
addressee. The prefix 'inter' in 'intersubjectivity' suggests a reciprocal, two-
directional participation. While this exchange as a result of reciprocal
engagement is true, the interaction can be one-directional. Visual art, poetry,
narration and theatre are examples of such one-directional interaction. Note
that the interaction between the addresser and addressee does not have to be in
the immediate setting and time frame in order for this common ground to be
determined. Without an actual theatrical performance taking place, the Greek
play *Prometheus Bound* written by Homer can still be read, deciphered, and understood upon the establishment of the common ground which takes time and location into account. Neither is this notion of intersubjectivity an unknown concept in art history. This concept is based on very fundamental common sense in this discipline. We cannot apply linear perspective developed in the Italian Renaissance to a Minoan pottery painting. Art historians have to intellectually position themselves on the same plateau as the artist of the specific time in history in order to accurately analyze his/her work. Iconographers can only account for the symbols or allegories available and appropriate to the particular artists at the right time and place. The mechanism of intersubjectivity and how it facilitated Duchamp’s visual and linguistic manipulation will be properly discussed in 4.4 under the subtitle “On Implicature.”

### 1.2 The Hypothesis

Returning to the analogy of the “language” in a chess game, with the objective to win by means of breaking the rules of indexicality, both players are reconstructing scenarios that are opposite to those common grounds mentioned above; or the time (*which turn of mine you’ll be cornered*) and space (*my next move and direction I shall take*) are meant to be concealed. Both players are meant to be uncooperative. The “visual” product of each move is an attempt to project a mental context with the opposite effect – tricking the opposing party
into making a move that will result in losing the game but not realizing it in
time. Of course, to a person who is not familiar with the rules of the game,
none of the moves will make any sense. Somewhat parallel to this construction
of reversed mental context, in Portrait of Chess Players (figure 1) Duchamp
cubistically fragmented the players into many unrecognizable planes of colors.
Yet the title unanimously suggested to viewers that they were looking at two
chess players. From the perspective of art, the success of this cubist painting
was partly a result of the irony of not knowing visually that they were chess
players but thinking intellectually that they were. From the perspective of
pragmatics, the success was due to the intersubjectivity conventionally
established between the artist and the viewer. As discussed earlier, pragmatics
deals with the encoding of meaning conveyed with an expression and the
addresser has to make sure that what is intended will be successfully inferred,
namely decoded, by the addressee; and this process requires intersubjectivity.
When it comes to Portrait of Chess Players, cubism had already been
established as an artistic mode before the making of the piece by many other
notable Cubists that came before Duchamp, such as Picasso and Braque. What
a cubist painting should look like became a common ground between Duchamp
and the viewer. In addition, the title being a direct reference to what was
painted was a conventional norm. Therefore, Portrait's conformity to the
Cubistic mode and the title suggesting chess players immediately established
the intersubjectivity, or common ground, that was required to interpret
Duchamp's intended meaning. Since the painting was appreciated under the

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mutual shared contextual knowledge that the title was a direct reference to what was painted and of the accepted mode of cubism, the title and the Cubistic mode were in conflict to each other because Cubists’ paintings normally did not include movements (one has to move to play chess;) instead, they preferred still life, landscape and portraits. Likewise, the notoriety of Duchamp’s Nude Descending a Staircase (figure 2) was indebted to his familiarity with such conventionally established intersubjectivity. It contained the same movement versus Cubism conflict; (in fact, the suggestion of movement was more overtly conveyed, not just visually, but title suggested so.) The painting caused an infamous controversy in the history of modern art. The inclusion of Duchamp’s Nude Descending a Staircase in the Armory show, New York, 1913, resulted in a revolt of art in America. The landscape of the American art scene since then had been altered and Duchamp’s reputation had been established before the making of readymades; and in fact, even before he arrived in America in 1915, Duchamp had been notoriously well-known.7

Duchamp succeeded in both disciplines. He was linguistically, as well as pragmatically, knowledgeable enough to make anti-establishment statements by means of readymades. His stature as an artist was influential enough to challenge the definitions and rules of institutionalized art forms. As a result, the hypothesis of this interdisciplinary thesis is that pragmatics theory and its principles, although geared to linguistic interpretation, were essential to

Duchamp’s artistic intention and its interpretation. Duchamp demonstrated his expertise in pragmatic principles, not in the form of theory and dissertation, but in the form of visual art. (Note that these principles were not introduced until 1967,\(^8\) postdating most readymades; but one does not have to be an expert in linguistics to use language to achieve an objective.) Very much like a speaker unknowingly engaging in the application of these pragmatic principles to obtain the most desired outcome through speech, Duchamp applied the same principles to successfully prove the inadequacy of Greenbergian modernism and the impracticality of definitions imposed by the museological institution, and to analyze and execute visual and mental ironies. Therefore, the hypothesis of this paper is that:

There is a correspondence between the principles of pragmatics in linguistics and the mechanism of visual communication in art, namely from Duchamp’s intended meaning encoded in his art to the correct interpretation by means of inferences on the part of the addressee; as a result, the theoretical explanations from the perspective of pragmatics used to account for language use and its comprehension are also adequately applicable to the interpretation of art.

\(^8\) Referring to Grice’s theory of conversational implicature, which will be discussed hereafter.
Figure 1. Portrait of Chess Players /Portrait de joueurs d'echecs. 1911.

Figure 2. *Nude Descending a Staircase*, 1912
2. RESEARCH

2.1 Conditions Required Prior to Thesis Presentation

The objectives of this study are simple. First, I am to demonstrate the correspondence between artistic interpretation and linguistic interpretation in terms of pragmatics theory; along with the correspondence between the mental judgments (cognitive assumptions) that take place prior to the making of artistic statements and speech statements. It is then to prove that Duchamp adopted strategies of pragmatics to accomplish his goals; thus the success of readymades, as well as that of his earlier paintings, should be attributed to his vehement belief that art could not be merely retinal without the involvement of the mind; just as chess viewing and ideogram or poetry reading cannot be free of the mind. (Again, one does not have to be an expert in linguistics to be linguistically competent.)

For this interdisciplinary thesis to examine and discuss the hypothesis stated above, the reader and I must first accept the following conditions:

1. Statement made with art – we agree that art is an expression and a form of non-verbal communication.

2. Label of “art” – on the premise of personal judgment, meaning to say that one has the rights to disagree with museological authority, we agree that readymades were indeed art.
3. Status as artist – on the same premise stated above, we agree that Duchamp was indeed an artist.

4. Acceptance by institutions – we agree that museums, galleries, art historians/critics/philosophers, and scholars alike had endowed Duchamp with the status of artist, and given readymades the label of “art.”

5. Label of anti-art – we agree that readymades were anti-art. The reason will be discussed by means of George Dickie’s definition of anti-art in the literature review section.

6. The viewers – we agree that viewers of readymades refer to those who either belonged to or were familiar with the culture and society in which readymades were made, presented, discussed and critiqued. And most importantly, they understood the intended meaning that Duchamp put forth in his readymades, (which will be discussed under “On Implicatures.”) Note that viewers are sometimes known as the addressees throughout this paper.

2.2 Research Design and Resources

The fact that Marcel Duchamp is recognized to be one of the most influential artists in western society in the twentieth century presented some significant implications in terms of pragmatics theory. Such implications are in the discourses between Duchamp and his addressees in the art world, and the
implications have different meanings and significance in these discourses. Therefore, using the George Dickie's definition of anti-art in the sociological sense and the logic of translating visual art to an ostensive statement, (these two aspects will be explained in the following section,) pragmatic analysis will be applied to these discourses. The correspondence between the mechanism of discourse made in visual art and the mechanism of pragmatics in linguistics in the socio-cultural domain will be examined by means of

1. comprehending what Duchamp’s pre-readymade work and readymades entailed (entailment*),

2. comprehending the implicit meaning of pre-readymade work and readymades (implicature*),

3. investigating how well pragmatic theory explains Duchamp’s theory of decoding art with the way language is decoded.

4. investigating how the inferences were employed to decode implicatures of pre-readymade work and readymades and what devices Duchamp used to successfully guide addressees the correct interpretations. As mentioned earlier, for the intended meanings to materialize, the audience and the statement maker must have a common ground, or mutually shared contextual knowledge. This mutually shared contextual knowledge has to be assessed and evaluated by the addresser before an utterance is made; and addressee has to draw inferences based on these

* These terms will be defined and explained later in the paper with examples in speech and subsequently applied to the visual language of readymades.
premises within the boundary of such mutually shared knowledge to accurately interpret the intended meaning of the utterance.

The data required for this research project will be based primarily on literary resources. Duchamp’s own statements about art-making, philosophy, and the meaning of readymades, and published books by his biographer Arturo Schwartz will account for Duchamp’s linguistic strategies and awareness of pragmatic principles. Secondly, the formal analyses of the aesthetics of readymades focused in other theses and articles will be applied to demonstrate Duchamp’s strategies. Greenbergian literature on modern art against which Duchamp’s anti-modernism was directed will also be examined. Other essays and critiques pertaining to the logic of applying linguistics to art and the justification of such application, such as Saussure’s structuralism, and Foucault’s comments on Magritte’s *This is not a Pipe*, will be evaluated. Subsequently, theories in pragmatics will be explained. The pragmatic strategies that Duchamp employed in his readymades will then be laid out in a correlating fashion to demonstrate the consistency with the principles of pragmatics as predicted.

Duchamp believed that art should be read, deciphered, and interpreted in the way that language was construed. So, every expression of a meaning in poetry and visual art was calculated and strategized, because art (and chess) was an “abstract image akin to poetic idea of writing” and art (and chess) was an
“ideographic execution.” The hypothesis is that his belief was a viable concept, which can be supported and explained with theories in pragmatics. Duchamp's artistic enterprise of course made every effort to corroborate this belief. This by no means suggests that Duchamp was a pragmatic theorist. Just as a person without any pragmatic awareness competently uses language to achieve goals, Duchamp engaged in the strategies of pragmatics to accomplish his artistic goals. Artistic communication can be equated to theories in pragmatics. The outcome of this study is thus that, between the mechanism of expression and interpretation in art and the mechanism of projection and interpretation in language, there is a perfect conformity when analyzed with pragmatics theories in linguistics. The following chapters will discuss, the motivation, conception, function and interpretation of readymades and Duchamp's strategies as they are reflected and explained by the theoretical frameworks of pragmatics.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND COMMENTS

3.1 Art as Ostensive Statement

In his 1975 essay "What is Anti-Art?" George Dickie discussed the definition of anti-art by means of a sociological framework. Dickie successfully

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9 Damisch, 10
established the meaning of anti-art. In the simplest terms, anti-art is what is different from the institutional conception of art. There are four kinds of anti-art: 1. art made with the participation of chance, 2. art with unconventional content, 3. an artist’s action that does not result in any object (e.g. Happenings,) 4. “Readymades.”

Although Duchamp’s readymades had been widely accepted as an anti-art art, his statement of “this is art” had to be asserted before readymades were given the label “anti-art.” Then, in 1994, another essay by Thierry de Duve, “Echoes of the Readymade: Critique of Pure Modernism,” postulated that there is a paradigm of enunciative and linguistic function on which readymades operated because art objects could be translated into a statement that is ostensive, i.e. “here is art” or “this is art.” While these two articles deal with the phenomenology and philosophy of Duchamp’s readymades, they do not discuss and examine the implications of pragmatics. These assertive, but non-verbal, statements of “this is anti-art” and “this is art” were a remarkable phenomenon because they resulted in my observation – the mechanism of visual statement made in art corresponds with the mechanism of pragmatics in linguistics in the socio-cultural domain, which will be further examined in the following discussion.

11 Dickie, 3.
Following de Duve’s logic of translating visual art to an ostensive statement, every art object is thus committed to a speech act. Speech act refers to the fact that a speaker accomplishes goals by virtue of speaking. Speakers use language, as do writers, in an attempt to attain the most desirable outcome, ranging from conveying a message to merely producing effects on the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the hearer. Likewise, by means of a non-verbal expression, a visual artist is telling something or making a point. Appropriately, he/she is carrying out a function analogous to a speech act. This function involves, not the conventional verbal language which linguists examine, but the visual language into which the art object is translated. Once a visual art object is presented and subsequently translated into a statement, there will be a receiving end, namely the addressee; therefore, a discourse arises for pragmatic analysis. What the preceding two authors, Dickie and de Duve, concluded is that, firstly, readymades were interpreted and understood as both art and anti-art. Secondly, art can be translated into linguistic statements. These statements can be as fundamental as “here is art” or “this is art.” They can also be as multilayered as anti-establishment, anti-modernism and anti-art statements. However, the following analysis will provide the reasoning that supports Duchamp’s notion that art should be interpreted the way an ideogram is interpreted. 

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14 Damisch, 10
3.2 The Logic of Art and Linguistics

"[My aim is] to transfer the significance of language from words to signs, into a visual expression of word, similar to the ideogram of the Chinese language."^{15}

Marcel Duchamp

The relationship between art and linguistics is inherently inseparable. Such a relationship is not an unexplored subject. Neither is the relationship a newly-developed one. From the earliest hieroglyphs and ideograms, to medieval times and the Renaissance, and then to Modernism and Marcel Duchamp, art, as language, is a medium or a system of communication between the artist and the viewer. Duchamp’s idea of art being decipherable as poetry and ideograms is a very logical analogy. To examine this art-to-language relationship, we must first simplify the concept of linguistics and subsequently identify the specific elements in linguistics to which art can be adapted.

Linguistics deals with the building blocks of language and their mutual interaction. These building blocks consist of words (semantics), sentences and grammar (syntax), and the meaning entailed upon the combination of the above-said elements (pragmatics.) The problem in semantics that always bombarded the editors of English dictionaries is that meaning does not truly reside in the

word but in the minds of those who hear or read it. The decoding of its meaning is a contextually-based enterprise. This fact alone guarantees that meaning will be to a great degree amorphous; no two people share the exact same experience to which a word refers. Therefore, the meaning of the word will vary slightly or greatly from individual to individual. According to Saussurean linguistics, words are by no means representational of anything unless meanings are assigned.\textsuperscript{16} Neither are letters. Words and letters are just symbols; pictorial elements that have no direct reference to any objects. To make it possible for a pictorial element to "refer" to an object, referential meaning must be assigned. In English, for example, the linguistic relationship between visual form (words) and the meaning (concept) is arbitrary. The word "car" does not mean "\$\text{ft}\$" unless the meaning of "\$\text{ft}\$" is assigned to the word "car" (figure 3.) The letters C, A, R, were by no means representational before the meaning assignment took place. Even upon this meaning assignment to words, by virtue of the fact that human communication is not achieved by uttering or stating a single word in a sentence, explaining the function of communication requires more than Saussurean structuralism and semantics. Pragmatics can account for the abstract aspects of human communication because pragmatics explains communication from the perspective that involves, not just semantic meanings, but the interplay of other meanings that come from syntax, context, and speech act (i.e. what the speaker wants to achieve by means of expression.)

From Medieval times to the Renaissance, art served as a narrative for spiritual inspiration or a reminder for the illiterate masses. The figure of Christ on the crucifix would not mean anything to the viewer without comprehending the significance of the crucifixion. The Virgin and Child would merely be a portrait of mother and a baby without the appreciation of redemption. It is obvious that this kind of narrative is a linguistic activity. Be it art or speech, communication is always present. Be it visually or aurally, there is a projecting end and a receiving end. One would assert that the difference here is that linguistics involves words, not pictures. However, not all languages are letter-based. While the arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified is
true in English, it isn't always adequate to analyze other languages. Here, I shall use Chinese language as an example (as did Duchamp, quoted on page 16.)

Chinese characters evolved from Xiangxing Wenzi, or ideograms. And these in turn evolved from hieroglyphs, or Xiangxing (figure 4.) The idea that it was pictographs from which Chinese characters evolved resulted in the belief that painting and calligraphy share a common origin. Recent archeological findings have indeed provided us with sufficient evidence that paintings in fact appeared before the invention of script. There was a close connection between the evolutionary processes of script writing, more appropriately known as calligraphy, and painting. The aesthetic appeal of lines and the distinctive techniques of brushwork became integral parts for both calligraphy and painting. The truth is words and pictures are not different. They are both visual stimuli serving the same linguistic function. There can be a million words referring to "†," but this symbol † always refers to a man. Or, it always narrates, "it is a man, therefore, this restroom is designated for men." Now replace the symbol † with the word "man." And the same message is conveyed. The reasonable conclusion is that symbols and words serve a communicative purpose. To fulfill this purpose, and to exemplify the role of pragmatics in art, we have to combine all the ingredients required to fully understand the intended meaning of the symbol † that consist of the semantic meaning or the signified, (i.e. a man), the context, (i.e. on a door of a room in a

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building), and the speech act, (i.e. to inform that this is the restroom designated to men). In a nutshell, the meaning-to-symbol/word relationship parallels the relationship of meaning-to-art; and both written language and visual art serve a linguistic function known as pragmatics. Linguistic function and art function are thus more similar than different. Therefore, linguistics theory is appropriately applicable to art.

3.3 Duchamp’s Cubism – Physicality versus Semiosis

Duchamp proto-Cubist painting started from Young Man and Girl in Spring in Neuilly, 1911 (figure 5.)\textsuperscript{18} This painting included a feminine figure and a masculine figure that were rendered in a nominal fashion. The two abstract bodies were, as if drained of their fullness, elongated in an almost geometric way. While in Munich in 1912, Duchamp painted The Bride Stripped Bare by the bachelors (La Meriée mise à nu par les célibataires, figure 6.) This painting served as one of the preliminary sketches for the Large Glass of 1915-23. The Cubist figures of the bride and bachelors were even more fragmented. Although not entirely, the figures were rendered almost unrecognizable. It is evident, as this painting demonstrated, Duchamp started to be preoccupied with the loss of the body to vision as Picasso was. A painting like Apropos of Little Sister of 1911 (figure 7), Duchamp employed an unsettling disarticulation of his subject. All her limbs were disjointed, elongated, and spread out like an insect.

\textsuperscript{18} David Joselit, Infinite Regress – Marcel Duchamp 1910-1941 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: the MIT Press, 1998), 11
Again, the body appeared to have been drained of its fullness. What is different from Picasso’s analytic cubism in which physicality was scattered across a glittering, narrowly woven surface, the figure in *Apropos of Little Sister* was dispersed in a way that larger, folded outward, slices of flesh merged into the picture field. This Duchampean visual vocabulary was also applied in other works, such as *Sonata*, also of 1911 (figure 8.) – passages of thickly painted tone of physicality dispersed across the surface, but meanwhile, partial contours of recognizable anatomy was left behind as traces of physicality, which was achieved by means of applying the outline with thin, skeleton-like dark colors such as brown or black. This rendering of flesh spilling out of the surrounding field and the faint residue of desiccated coating of a body or a skeletal rod further evolved to a state of pure abstraction in 1912 when Duchamp painted the *Bride* (figure 9) and *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* (figure 10.) The visual field in these two paintings was not organized as a surface of pure, leveled and even flatness. They had depths, light and shadow suggesting grid and chiaroscuro as if an entanglement of visceral matter in a deep cavern of bodily space. Duchamp rendered the collapse of the body against a background of indefinable pulsions without localizing around a subject or even definable organs; in other words, it was as though the subject was disintegrated into a cluster of mere internal reproductive organs. As the observation drawn by Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois, Picasso’s analytic cubism was described as his achievement of linguistically executed representation in his *papiers*.

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19 Joselit, 21
20 Francis M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp – The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Ghent, Amsterdam: Ludion Press, 1999), 45
They argued that in these works, Picasso had developed a visual vocabulary based on the arbitrary and distinctive character of the Saussurean sign. A fragment of cut-out newspaper being read as the right side of a guitar (figure 11,) for instance, was what Krauss called “an onset of semiosis” – a disappearance of materiality or concrete quality within representation. There was a belief among the psychologists of the late nineteenth century that flat retina could only perceive the world as flat impression. Depth only existed in the perceiver’s memory or the tactile experience in space, not in the realm of the visual. It was to this belief that Picasso responded in the form of artistic experimentation – signifying depth (the signified) on a flat surface of a picture plane called art object (the signifier,) instead of illusionistically evoking depth. This body of physicality being broken up, analyzed, and reassembled, not just in an abstracted form, but in the form of words, such as the newsprint fonts, could be said to be the greatest irony for the illusionist paintings because the projection of texts could not be any flatter. Such subversion of physicality by eclipsing the flesh with language constituted a kind of semiotic “script.” Anatomies flickering in and out of legibility of recognizable printed materials or the overlapping meaning of a cutout newspaper column to a guitar or a head qualified as the signified analytical meaning (cubist analysis) and Picasso’s art object qualified as the

* building on the geometric planes of cut paper then being glued together, also known as collages.

21 Joselit, 21

Lai, 24
signifier. This arbitrary relationship between the signified and signifier could also be found in Duchamp’s *Network of Stoppages* (figure 12.) Here, while the difference between Duchamp’s and Picasso’s semiotic analysis of cubism were aesthetically evident, the similarity in terms of linguistic interest was striking. The difference was that Duchamp left the residue of physicality more than Picasso did.

By 1914, Duchamp had developed two sophisticated visual idioms – a vocabulary of flesh-like slabs and linear hinges in Cubistic mode, such as *Nude Descending a Staircase*, and a precise and blank-faced language of mechanical drawing, such as *Chocolate Mill*. However, *Network of Stoppages* had neither of these idioms. *Network* consisted of the earlier painting *Young men and Girl in Spring* rotated ninety degrees positioned on the left. As a result, residue of physicality, namely the *Girl*, served as a more potent suggestion. On the right, there was a series of “capillary tubes,” which was what Jean-François Lyotard called “libidinal band.” Lyotard elaborated the kind of visual system of embodied semiosis in his “Libidinal Economy” as a concept of signification on a threshold. This threshold was between the real and the symbolic, or the body and language; and it was permeable rather than strictly linear. The sign emerging from the flesh was carved out of the body. This sign held physicality in suspension leaving behind the legibility of organic pulsion. According to this theory, the premise for signification was a kind of acephalous body, which

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23 Joselit, 21
Lyotard called the libidinal band or great ephemeral skin, which was split apart and spread out as a single surface. This great ephemeral skin was where psychoanalytic and semiotic meanings were produced.\(^2\) Lyotard’s theory of great ephemeral skin provided us with an explanation for the relationship Duchamp posited between body and sign that resulted in the peculiar rendition of the woman in both *Bride* and *The Passage from Virgin to Bride*. The relationship between the semiotic and the physical served as the meaning to be signified while the painting itself played the role of the signifier. This was the evolution from the recognizability of figures in *Young Man and Girl in Spring* to the total loss of physicality in *Bride* and *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* during which Duchamp’s cubism entered the most semiotic state. Duchamp’s cubist paintings, like those of Picasso’s, replaced the recognizable body or the physical dimension with a visual script that was indexical.\(^5\) Here, the establishment of indexicality, i.e. the encoding of perspective in relation to the addressee, was premised on the knowledge of the cubists’ experimentation of the flatness of picture plane and the fragmentation of their subject. In other words, the addressee had to know what Cubism was about in order to understand the Cubists’ works. This contextual knowledge was mutually shared between Duchamp and his addressee. Joselit concluded in his “Infinite Regress” that “Duchamp’s paintings of 1911-12 might be described as machines for producing language from the tangled labyrinth of the pulsional body.”\(^6\)

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\(^5\) Joselit, 24
\(^6\) Joselit, 27
Duchamp’s, as well as Picasso’s, replacement of the recognizable object or the physical dimension with a visual script that was abstract is parallel to the configuration of alphabetical order to form a meaning that is recognizable only to the mind but not to the eye, such as m, a, and n signifying ♦. From the works mentioned above, Duchamp’s interests in linguistics are evident even during his pre-readymade period. Therefore, it is imaginable that he continued to employ linguistic means to make art, especially when he had anti-art statements in mind. While Duchamp was incorporating language into art as a form of anti-art, art and language were once considered to be mutually exclusive by other modernists because they regarded the latter as inadequate.

Figure 5 Young Man and Girl in Spring

Figure 6 The Bride Stripped Bare by the Bachelors

Lai, 27
Figure 7 Apropos of Little Sister

Figure 8 Sonata

Figure 9 The Bride

Figure 10 Passage from Virgin to Bride
3.4 Greenbergian Modernism and its Critique of Language

In his essay on modernism, art critic Clement Greenberg claimed that modern art was free of cultural ties. "Modernism as a whole distinguished itself by its inclusiveness, its openness, and also its indeterminateness." Modernism engrossed itself in "medium and exploratory technique, and a very workman-like concern." Greenbergian formalism reduced painting to the most basic state of being – a mere optical object. Formalism was, in art theory, the belief that aesthetic value was independent and other factors such as ethical and social considerations were detached from artistic judgment. The purely formal or abstract qualities; namely the aesthetic properties that gave rise to form: shape, composition, color or structure, took precedence. Each art had to

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engage in the medium and method that were peculiar to the nature of the art itself in order to be at its fullest. Painting, for example, should emphasize its unique and exclusive feature – namely its flatness. Realistic rendition was considered “using art to conceal art.” This is to say that artists in the past had used paint to hide the flatness of painting, which should have been cherished in the first place. By means of “self-criticism,” modernists, such as Kandinsky, and Mondrian, abandoned the representation of recognizable objects. The priority was now the formal properties of the art. It was disassociated from history; neither was it peculiar to any culture or nationality. It had its own priority. It was of the purest form. Nothing was relevant except its aesthetic properties. Modernism was conscious of itself and its pure optical experience could be appreciated by individuals universally. The so-called “pure” in Modernism also asserted that art should serve no purpose and had no function other than being just art. In other words, a painting was nothing other than itself, independent from any representational realism. A painting was “to exclude the representational or the ‘literary,’ that painting [had] made itself abstract.” Therefore, modernism was by nature an anti-linguistic program. Greenberg’s reasoning was connected with the fact that language was inherently embedded in culture. One could not exist without the other.

29 See Translator’s Introduction: Michel Foucault and James Harkness, This is Not a Pipe (University of California Press, 1983), 4
At about the same time, Rene Magritte was applying art in his engagement in a critique of language. The involvement of linguistics in art-making and art-critique was solely contained within the boundaries of the “representational nature of language.” In other words, Michel Foucault and Magritte believed that language was simply to duplicate reality like the three-dimension reality illusionistically depicted on a two-dimensional surface of a painting in the Renaissance. True linguists would find this containment within the boundaries of the “representational nature” of language to be inadequate; inadequate because Foucault and Magritte’s critique of language was impractically limited. The critique was based exclusively on semantics. Foucault’s assertion of the representational nature of language was constantly referring to words and their being signs for things. But the truth is that linguistics is beyond the mere identification and reproducing of reality. It is widely said that, to support Foucault’s claims, Magritte in his art by linguistic means – or more precisely semantic means – used literalism to subvert itself. Magritte’s painting, *This is not a Pipe* (1926; figure below) resembles a page from a catalog that sells pipes. But there is one striking characteristic. Beneath the precisely depicted pipe, which is set against a white background is a sentence that says “Ceci n’est pas une pipe,” (This is not a pipe.)

Magritte’s strategy to exemplify Foucault’s mimetic quality of language involved deploying essentially familiar images but simultaneously their recognizability was immediately undermined and rendered debatable by conjunctions of “impossibility,” “irrationality,” or “senselessness.” Magritte ignored the accurate resemblance and explicitly flouted the obvious. “This is not a pipe” because it isn’t! It is a painting! Magritte’s subversive endeavor in *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* perfectly fell within the anti-linguistic program of modernism. Art historians and critics, such as Foucault, gave him much credit for bluntly challenging the limit of mimetic quality of words. The engagement of “impossible,” “irrational,” or “senseless” rendition of familiar objects could be found in works by other modernist painters, such as surrealist Dali’s *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans* (1936) and Max Ernst’s *Celebes* (1921), Cubists like Picasso and Picabia, etc.; as well as non-representational, abstract painters like Kandinsky and Mondrian, who broke away from familiar object all
together. However, this philosophy of modern art being autonomous from language that "[was] buried in representational realism"\(^{31}\) was contradicting itself. These works of art, which supposedly support the anti-linguistic program of modernism, comply with pragmatics theory in linguistics, (which will be addressed hereafter.) In other words, modern art could not be free of cultural ties.

Lying in the study of linguistics there is an objectivist paradigm that focuses on the separation of subject and object matters. This principle treats word meaning with the metaphysical distinction between essential and contingent properties of entities; namely, definitional knowledge and encyclopaedic knowledge. The former, solely based on essential properties of an entity, requires specialized information but excludes cultural facts and relevant information about the designated entity, which is what the latter is based on. For example, the direct meaning of the word "pipe" is clearly understood as a tubular instrument for smoking, but the associated social knowledge concerning this object, its role as a status, culture and gender marker, is not part of the meaning.\(^{32}\) Not only does the objectivist paradigm exclude contingent facts and properties from the meaning of language, it also withdraws social aspects from the definitional meaning. This dictionary-encyclopedia distinction presents a major difference in the function, as well as its analysis of, semantics and pragmatics in language and art. The word "right"

\(^{31}\) Harkness, 9
for example, is defined as correct or agreeing to something in terms of definitional meaning. But when one sarcastically says “right,” he/she is not agreeing, instead he/she is disagreeing. If we count on semantics, i.e. definitional meaning, to decode the speaker’s meaning in this case, misunderstanding will occur. The explanation of how we correctly decode and understand the sarcastic right is when pragmatics comes into play.

Foucault and Magritte’s critique of language and art is based on literalism and the relationship of words to the things they represent. While it is reasonable to say that because of the exclusion of pragmatics, Foucault and Magritte were engaged in a discourse on language and art within the paradigm of objectivity, the significance of linguistics, however, is more than just fulfilling the need to say what we perceive. Because human perception is peripheral, and full comprehension requires both the understanding of essential and contingent properties, linguistic analysis in art engaging uniquely in semantics is impractical. A more holistic approach to examining the role of linguistics in art; namely, pragmatics, would be more realistic and logical. Instead of just focusing on the directly enunciative statement of “this painting is that thing, or not,” another linguistic element – “this painting is committing a pragmatic function,” should also be considered. This consideration of pragmatics is imperative simply because pragmatics exists in speech as well as art. A painting accurately depicting a pipe with a sentence negating the pipe obviously serves a function of subverting literalism. A pragmatic function of
refuting or anti-establishment is evidently executed because an abstract painting, a Cubist’s or an impressionist’s painting is to disagree with the duplication of three-dimensional reality onto a flat surface. Hence, returning to the works mentioned above, Magritte’s *Ceci n’est pas une pipe*, Dali’s *Boiled Beans*, Cubism, Kandinsky’s and Mondrian’s abstract paintings, etc. there is a major contradiction in modern art. How could one possibly subvert language while language was in use to commit the act of subverting, or how could one undermine linguistics when their anti-establishment art executed a speech act? How could one arrive at an equation by discounting a vital portion of the same equation? The biggest contradiction in Greenbergian modernism was the question how could art be void of function while it served a pragmatic function? Isolation lacks academic integrity. It is as illogical to critique linguistics by ignoring pragmatics as it is to critique art by disregarding medium or context. Modern art could not be free of cultural ties.

To demonstrate this inherently inseparable relationship between art and linguistics, Marcel Duchamp’s strategies while making readymades were wittily calculated. Visual metaphors, satirical remarks, phonetic games, provocative ironies, and facetious titles were linguistic and artistic devices deployed synchronously in his readymades. This paper is hence engaged in a visual and pragmatic analysis on his works by examining and exploring such devices, as well as how his addressees interpreted his art. We shall approach this task by
first laying out some pragmatic theories – Entailment, Implicatures and inferences, and Grice’s theory of conversational implicature.

4. THE THEORIES OF PRAGMATICS

Be it language or art, to fully understand the intended meaning of a statement, an addressee must first understand the natural meaning known as entailment; and subsequently uncover the unnatural, but intended, meaning known as implicature. Uncovering the implicature requires some inferences to be drawn. For addresser to make sure that the intended but implied meaning will be successfully inferred and for addressee to draw appropriate inferences, mutually shared contextual knowledge is required. To examine this cognitive endeavor of decoding, we shall start from entailment.

4.1 On Entailment

4.1.1 First Connection between Art and Linguistics

Entailment refers to a meaning that is always associated with an expression so that on every occasion when the expression occurs the meaning occurs.\(^{33}\) This is to say that entailment is the natural meaning in every sentence, (although it may not be the intended meaning.) For example: “Sam is a

"bachelor" entails Sam is neither married nor dating. Language can construct a context because sentences are understood to mean more than what is said. In other words, context, also known as relevant elements in the social structure, can be revealed, created or impinged on by the use of language. Context here is not limited to just speech and what is in the physical world. It also involves cultural nuances. A person who is familiar with the western culture and the English language understands that when someone says that Sam is a divorcee, it entails that Sam has been married at least once but the sentence by no means reveals gender because Sam can be Samantha or Samuel. Therefore, before a successful discourse can take place knowledge of who Sam is must be present. Information like whether Sam had a husband or a wife, number of times Sam has been married, whether Sam is a bachelor or bachelorette, or even if Sam has any children, although relevant, is not part of the entailment. The point here is that, although important, entailment is not contextually informative. The context, which entailment builds, is too limited for the hearer to fully understand the intended meaning. Let us say that someone is attempting to be a matchmaker:

A: Not sure if I should go to the party.

B: Sam is a bachelor

Since entailment is like a foundation upon which implicature is built, given the above context, the implicature (intended but implied meaning) of “Sam is a bachelor” can be uncovered. Namely, A wants to match B up with Sam and suggests that B go to the party to meet Sam.

34 Grundy, 70
The connection between the entailment in linguistics and the entailment in art comprehension is their similarity. The significance of this similarity is that it supports Duchamp’s ideology that art ought to be “the field where language, thought, and vision act on one another,” as in the analogy he drew between art, poetry, and chess playing. In the use of language, there is a natural meaning in every sentence that may not provide the entire, complete meaning that is intended by the addressee. Similarly, there is an inherent meaning in every artistic expression. The entailment is always who had the authority to confer status in the art world and what was qualified to have art status conferred upon it. As de Duve described it, the meaning of modern art was nothing more than a social and institutional struggle over the authority to name who was an artist and what art was. This meaning, like language use, may not be the meaning intended by the artists. To reach the intended meaning (i.e. implicature,) the addressee must understand the entailment first. Therefore, the next section is to examine the entailment in art.

35 Schwartz, 69.
36 These questions were examined in the studies of George Dickie, which was from the perspective of sociological frameworks. His work was analyzed in the article written by Richard J. Sclafani, “Art as a Social Institution: Dickie’s New Definition,” The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), 111-114.
37 Thierry De Duve, Kant After Duchamp, (MIT Press, 1996), 389
4.1.2 The Entailment in Art

Firstly, there are two levels of meaning in art. We have what it means to be art and what it means to be accepted as art. What it means to be art is assigned by the artist from whom the art derives; and the latter is assigned by museological institutions. While there is a very fine line between an artist’s assignment and an institutional assignment, the latter has social authority far greater than artists do. When an art object is displayed in a gallery or a museum, this authoritative recognition or institutionalization of art is entailed. An art object seen in an artist’s studio lacks this authoritative acceptance unless such recognition has already been granted either to another art object made by that artist or directly to the artist him/herself. A prestigious award is an example. For convenience, we shall label such artists “accomplished artists,” even though that term may have a different standard from one individual to another. When an art object is viewed at museological setting, say Museum of Modern Art, one notion registers – “this is art.” This is art with distinction. The discriminative validation has been granted to the art object and the artist. George Dickie appropriately analogized this endowment to baptism. Simply put, the entailment of an art object made by an accomplished artist or the entailment of an art object on exhibit in a museum or a gallery is the basis for readymades to be successful as a means of expression for Duchamp. Entailment in artistic expression is the foundation for the integrity of the intellectual statement that Duchamp made vis-à-vis readymades. Without this inherent

38 See Sclafani, 111-114.
entailment, Duchamp could not have made the same impact as he did with readymades; namely the statement of anti-art. The understanding of the art world’s social nuances of who can say what and how to say it successfully; namely what condition (i.e. how) was initially required for Duchamp (who) to present readymades (what) as artistic statements with the recognition and acceptance from the museological authority (successfully,) is the entailment of artistic expression. In the next section we shall discuss in depth the entailment of Duchamp’s visual art.

4.2 What Duchamp’s Art Entailed – *Nude Descending a Staircase*

Entailment of an utterance provides an incomplete contextual knowledge. As part of this knowledge, there is a property of indexicality, which was discussed earlier. Words like *here* or *this* identify particular referents that the addressee picks out and the addressee points out. Art objects inherently carry the properties of indexicality. The common ground, or mutually shared contextual knowledge between the addressee and the addressee, is construed as the condition of who can decide what art is, as well as how to acquire the status to confer art status. Every art object on exhibit in a gallery naturally carries an ostensive statement – “this is art” and “here is art;” the gallery or the artist being the one visually pointing out and the viewer being the one visually picking out. This convention of who can say what art is and how to say it is the foundation
of mutually shared contextual knowledge or common ground that Duchamp counted on to convey the meaning of anti-establishment; but he must first acquire the authority to do so. We shall examine Duchamp’s artistic feat starting from his move to Paris to pursue art. This historical data shall account for his assimilation to the art world of his days in order to acquire the said authority to confer art status. In addition, the notorious Armory Show of 1913 in New York, at which time the artist stature that had been conferred upon him was now confirmed, will also provide us with the understanding of the extent to which such assimilation took place and his evolution that transmuted his works into the intellectual art known as readymade.

4.2.1 The Process of Authority Acquisition

Marcel Duchamp went to Paris and stayed with his brother to study drawing and painting at the famous Académie Julian. At that moment in time, Paris had attracted vast numbers of artists of all schools. Here in the French capital, Duchamp adopted his contempt for stylistic purity and placed a great value on the intellectual dimension in art. This was due to the influence of the forming of organized artist groups by the progressives and interminable debates regarding theory were relentlessly carried out. In addition, artistic movements simultaneously succeeded one another with an uncommon speed. Between 1902, and the 1911, Duchamp assimilated all of the popular innovations in drawing. Or, it could also be said that he absorbed and learned all of modern art
had to offer. During those years he produced works with the styles of late Impressionism, Symbolism, Cubism, Fauvism, and Futurism. This was the crucial stage of Duchamp because it was the time before any status was conferred upon him; the time when apprenticeship took priority over invention.

In 1902, he painted *Landscape in Blainville* (figure 13) using the conventionalized Impressionist techniques – staccato brushstrokes capturing in a hurry the fleeting atmosphere of a landscape. Lacking the literary and philosophical content, it was described as painting made by a “stupid painter.” The painting conformed perfectly to the Impressionists’ idea of communicating the imprint of a landscape on a retinal level; neutral beings without feelings like a camera. Therefore it lacked intellectual dimension. This “retinal pleasure” with “intellectual poverty” became what Duchamp profusely criticized and rejected consequentially.

The next technique that Duchamp assimilated was Fauvism. *Nude in Black Stockings* of 1910 (figure 14) was a major departure not just in terms of style and technique but also his attitude toward the subject matter. The anxiety projected by the brushstrokes, the thick blobs of color and the juxtaposition of contrasting colors were techniques of Fauvism to which he had evidently assimilated. The frame cropping out one third of the nude’s head and the legs of the stool, coupled with the somewhat compromising position of the seated

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39 Ramirez explained that “as stupid as painter” was a popular derogatory phrase directed against painter during Duchamp’s youth. Duchamp had mentioned this phrase on an occasion as an example of what was to be avoided. See Juan Antonio Ramirez, *Love and Death, Even*, trans. Alexander R. Tulloch (Reaktion Books Ltd., London, 1998), 252

40 Ramirez, 252
nude, did not resemble the academies’ neutral world but a snapshot of a brothel. Then, Duchamp moved on to a brief Symbolist phase during which he made several paintings, such as *the Portrait of Dr. Dumouchel* (figure 15,) *Paradise* (figure 16,) and *Young Man and Girl in Spring* (pg. 25.) These paintings were said to be embedded with symbols of the auras or corporal radiation, Biblical scenes and alchemy.41

A complete stylistic transformation occurred in October of 1911 during which Duchamp painted *Dulcinea* (figure 17.) Typical of Analytical Cubism, the painting had a subdued range of ochres, greens and greys distributed over geometrical planes with contours defined with darker colors. Like a succession of positions as one moves, each step in succession being contained in one composition, this was actually a portrait of a woman named Dulcinea repeated several times in one painting. In other word, it resembled a series of appearances captured with multiple exposures occurring as one image; or the ephemeral sightings of Dulcinea depicted as one image.42 This was a significant new function that Duchamp paint art adopted because Duchamp Cubism illustrated a progressive activity in the mind that gradually got accustomed to the complexity of a dynamic object. Duchamp froze the progressive activity of the mind and de-materialized the moving object in order to reveal its dynamism.

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41 See Ramirez, 254
42 Joselit, 48
At the end of the same year, Duchamp was invited by his brother to participate in a collaborative effort to decorate the latter’s kitchen. This collaboration, although casual, provided Duchamp with the first taste of displaying work along side with established artists because the collaboration consisted of contributions from notable artists such as Gleizes, Metzinger, and Léger. Although these notable figures might not have liked it, Duchamp contributed his diagrammatic Coffee Mill (figure 18.).43 Subsequently, between December 1911 and January 1912, Duchamp completed the second version of Nude Descending a Staircase (pg. 9.) Similar to the final result of Marey’s chronographs,44 the path and movement of the nude were implied with lines of animation and the dotted white lines at the elbow of the nude. Duchamp applied the reductive method of Cubism, fragmenting the nude to a series of brown and yellow planes. It also had the characteristic of Futurism. The futurists were also interested in the depiction of movement in several successive moments as did Duchamp in Nude Descending a Staircase. In February 1912, He presented it to Salon des Indépendents. The orthodox cubists, including those who contributed to the decoration of the kitchen, such as Gleizes, as well as his brothers, made their displeasure at his painting known to Duchamp. They objected to the suggestion of movement in the painting and the provocative title. To them, Nude did not conform to the doctrinaire view of what Cubist painting should be. The cubists also believed that with any reference to Futurism, their

43 Ramirez, 257
44 “Chronophotography” is “animated photography” that Marey developed. It consists of recording several phases of a movement on a single sensitive surface by means of a stroboscopic analyzing disc. It was applied to the flight of birds, and the motion of running, etc.
claim to an independent and unique position within the avant-garde would be undermined.\textsuperscript{45} This became the turning point in Duchamp’s artistic career. As a result of this experience, he decided to pursue art in a solitary and personal path; against the idea of belonging to any schools or groups of artists.\textsuperscript{46} In fact, it is imaginable that Duchamp decided to dedicate art making to the negation of definition or doctrinaire views of any specific group of art. He regarded the attitude of those Cubists who rejected him to be “naively foolish,” and their conservative and blatantly dogmatic behavior an aberration, especially artists who were supposed to be more open-minded than the general public.\textsuperscript{47} In spite of Salon des Indépendents’ rejection, \textit{Nude} was included in two shows: the first show was in April 1912, at Dalmau Gallery in Barcelona, and the second was in October, at the Gelanie de la Boétie in Paris. But it was in February 1913 at the Armory Show that Duchamp’s stature of artist was conferred upon him.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{landscape.jpg}
\caption{\textit{Landscape in Blainville}}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{nude.jpg}
\caption{\textit{Nude in Black Stockings}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{45} Naumann, 42
\textsuperscript{46} Ramirez, 257
\textsuperscript{47} Naumann, 45
Figure 15 (above) Portraits of Dumouchel

Figure 16 (above) Paradise

Figure 17 (below) Dulcinea

Figure 18 (below) Coffee Mill
4.2.2 The Armory Show

In spite of the rejection, *Nude Descending a Staircase*, (along with three other paintings,) was subsequently showcased at the enormous and infamous Armory Show, which started a revolution in American art. This artistic revolt under the guise of an art exhibition introduced an international avant-garde to a large American audience. Although it was hailed as scandalous and "accusations of quackery, insanity, immorality, and anarchy were typical responses, as were parodies – caricatures, doggerels and mock exhibitions," the Armory Show offered a tangible origin for significant changes in visual art in America and became a benchmark in the history of American modernism. Although assaulted by the critics, all of Duchamp's paintings were sold. What is noteworthy here is that whether the press was tolerant of the art is irrelevant. Of course, if the press was in favor of the art, the status of an artist would be more hastily established. However, if the conditions to secure the establishment of artist status for Duchamp were satisfied, they would nullify the press' negative comments and points of view; and they did. The first condition was that Duchamp's work was selected by individuals with authority in the art world, namely accomplished artists Walt Kuhn and Arthur B. Davies and critic Walter Pach; meaning his work was peer-reviewed and qualified to be exhibited. Secondly, the work was sold out. The Armory Show endowed Duchamp with a reputation with artistic authority. "This is art," the entailment,

48 <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MUSEUM/Armory/intro.html>
49 Arnason, 247
became more enunciative and emphatic upon meeting the requirements listed above. The stature of artist and his authority became the entailment of Duchamp’s paintings. Now not only did the statement of *Nude* defy the basis on which the rejection of the 1912 Salon des Indépendents was founded, although in moderate degree in terms of his anti-establishment sentiment, *Nude* formally subverted Cubism with the study of movement instead of static form and undermined Futurism with a traditional nude subject. Simultaneously, Duchamp’s reputation as a provocateur gave him the power to constantly subvert the modes of established artists, undermine their reliance on technical and aesthetic appeal and challenge the institutionalized idea of what art was. His priority now became the advocacy of intellectual and thoughtful art, as he subsequently analogized art to chess playing and poetry reading. Now he started to create art that was beyond retinal, in the service of the mind; namely, readymades. Readymades initiated a “rupture” in the convention of art and were subsequently institutionalized as art.
4.3 What Duchamp’s Art Entailed – Readymades

"Can one make works which are not works of ‘art’?"\textsuperscript{50}

Marcel Duchamp

Readymades were not made by the artist. They were objects of daily life that served a practical purpose. The craft from which these objects originated belonged to the manufacturers, or to be more precise, the industrial designers. These artists were the ones who initially, conforming to their functions, conceived the form of these objects and subsequently produced the prototype from which these objects were mass-produced. Unless these objects held hundreds of years of history like the pottery from the Aztecs or the metal cups of the Qin dynasty, they would not be recognized as art and be on display in museums. Before the twentieth century, no galleries would exhibit these objects of daily use. In other words, as discussed in the preceding paragraph, what can be called art depended solely on the institution. If an object is not considered art, then, the maker is not considered to be an artist. Technically, however, these industrial designers were artists. By today’s standard, they possessed the rights to the patent of their designs just like artists reserving the copyrights of their works. However functional these objects were, they still have aesthetic properties. The problem is that the label “art” can only be put on by the museological institutions. This institutionalization process is best exemplified

\textsuperscript{50} Naumann, 48
by the incident that Duchamp himself experienced: the exhibition of the New York Society of Independent Artists in 1917. After “making” several readymades, such as the Bicycle Wheel and In Advance of a Broken Arm, that went largely unnoticed because they were confined in his studio, Duchamp went on to the next readymade selection that was conceived with the knowledge that it would attract a profusion of public attention. Fountain was an unaltered porcelain urinal. Duchamp purchased it at plumbing supply store in Manhattan known as the J.L. Mott Iron Works Company. He then signed a fake name “R. Mutt” on the urinal (figure 19) and asked a female friend to submit the piece to first exhibition of the Society of Independence Artists, which had a policy of open to all submissions. Duchamp later explained that due to the fact that he was one of the founding members of the Independence Artists’ Organization and he was on its board of directors during the exhibition, it might appear to be a conflict of interest to submit his own work. Therefore, he signed it with a different name instead of his own.51 This signature of a pseudonym became a means by which Duchamp distanced himself from the authorship of his readymade. However, the association rejected Duchamp’s Fountain despite the fact that in principle the exhibition was totally un-juried and open to all submissions. Duchamp subsequently resigned from the association.52 Interestingly, when the legendary career of Duchamp persisted, readymades, which would not have been qualified as art before the twentieth century, became

51 Naumann, 72
52 Arnason, 248
an institutionalized art form by means of his assertion of the inadequacy of definition of art.

Figure 19. **Fountain** (Urinal)

The success of Readymades owed much to being intellectual stimuli, not to being beautiful. Before the deduction of functionality of these daily objects, the decisions on how to position and present them as art objects, how to assemble them, and what words to inscribe were made by Duchamp. Now these objects took on the function of being just art. Not the conventional art, but art that “was back in the service of the mind.”53 The boundary of the contemporary art field was transgressed; and the limits of public taste were tested. This notion of art being cerebral but not associated with taste, or anti-aesthetic, will be examined in 4.4.3. But in order to make this anti-art, namely the notion that anything with little or no manipulation by the artist could be art, one condition had to be satisfied first – the recognition as an artist. Artists, just like art, had to

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53 Arnason, 246
be accepted by appropriate institutions prior to acquiring the authority to break the conventions of the art world of Duchamp’s day.

The cycle – from the institutional recognition by making art leading to the acquisition of authority to make anti-art art, subsequently, to the “normalizing” of anti-art art that the art world has adapted – was a self perpetuating pattern. This situation has repeated itself throughout the history of art. The established norm of classical art was challenged by the assertion of medieval art usually in the service of Christianity. Mannerism started to introduce the illogical elements into the strict realism of the late Renaissance, such as the disproportionate anatomy and awkward postures in *Deposition* by Jacopo da Pontormo in the sixteenth century\(^5\) and inconsistent sizes of figures in terms of perspective in *the Crucifixion with Donors and Saints Peter and Margaret* by the Netherlandish painter Cornelis Engebrechtsz also in the sixteenth century.\(^5\) The resurgence of anti-art was especially aggressive in the nineteenth century. By deliberately flouting the well-established social convention, Modern artists, like Édouard Manet, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, and Eugène Boudin, etc., started an art revolt against the academic art, such as that of the well-established French Académie des Beaux-Arts (Academy of Fine Arts Salon) and the London’s Royal Academy who believed that art was governed by rules strictly akin to the laws of nature as established in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. They not only painted scenes of

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\(^5\) [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/zino/hd_zino.htm]
\(^5\) [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nman/hd_nman.htm]

Lai, 52
contemporary modern life breaking away from traditional subject matter but they also replaced the refined, smooth brushwork that was required by the realism governed by the laws of nature with the rough, visible brushstrokes known as the painterly effect in their paintings. These modern artists introduced the idea of radical and shocking alternatives to the academic Salon art to the public. These new alternatives gave rise to Impressionism that completely abandoned realism and explored more radical ideas, such as Monet’s capturing the ephemeral aspects of a changing moment. The new wave of avant-garde art, or anti-art paintings, of the nineteenth century, exactly like the art in the Armory Show, was greeted with outrage by the conservative public and was called “scandalous.” These “scandalous” works were subsequently considered to be the established “norm.” Mannerism, impressionism, Cubism, abstract Expressionism, etc., were all anti-art art that is now regarded as just art. Peter Burger made a appropriate comment that about this cycle: “Once the signed bottle dryer (figure 20) ha[d] been accepted as an object that deserve[d] a place in a museum, the provocation no longer provoke[d]; it turn[ed] into the opposite. If an artist today sign[ed] a stove pipe and exhibit[ed] it, that artist certainly [would] not defy the art market but [be] adapt[ed] to it.”

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56 Arnason, 13
What is noteworthy here is that an artist, be it Impressionist or Dadaist, must establish his/her status as an artist first before he/she can make anti-art carrying the entailment “this is art.” Similarly, it was the stature of artist that enabled Duchamp to question, challenge, admonish, critique and ridicule the established norms of his time. Duchampian anti-art, however, was different from those preceded him because he was the made several anti-craft statements. His accomplishment as an artist during his pre-readymade period made his anti-craft initiation possible. This by no means implies that the initiation of anti-craft as art and the critique made against the established norms via anti-art (i.e. readymades) were easy because Duchamp had established himself as an artist. But it was absolutely impossible for any amateurs to sign a shoe rack and be given a chance to exhibit that shoe rack at a gallery. So the statement-making sequence is simple. First came the condition of Duchamp making great art.
Then came the conferring of status as art upon pre-readymade works from museological authorities. Simultaneously, it was an ostensive statement of “Duchamp is an artist.” Only then could he assert that what did not fit into the conventional description of art, such as a bicycle wheel on a stool, was art. Such a sequence is formulated as follows:

\[
\text{Nude Descending a Staircase} = \text{art} \cdot \text{Duchamp} = \text{artist} \cdot \text{readymades} = \text{art}
\]
(Pre-readymades painting)  (anti-art)

Anti-art art can only be made by accomplished artists. Perhaps the “irony of all ironies” is that for an artist to be anti-establishment, his/her status as artist has to be established first. Be it a shoe rack in a gallery or a urinal on a pedestal in a museum, the entailment here involves the inherent meanings of who can say what successfully and how to say it to make a point dead on. Readymades would have failed to convey these meanings had they not been created by an accomplished artist or institutionalized by museological authority. This is because, like speech, art is highly based on context. Entailment has provided us with the understanding of who can say what and how to say it successfully. Without the prerequisites of the recognition and acceptance from the museological authority, art could not be translated into an ostensive statement “this is art” or “here is art.” The entailment of readymades and his pre-readymade work, such as \textit{Nude}, was therefore Duchamp had the authority to confer status and readymades was qualified to have art status conferred upon it.
Entailment (natural meaning) serves as a springboard for inferences to be drawn and consequently implicature (unnatural meaning) is reached. Without entailment, the implicature of readymades will not surface because anti-art could not have come to be as such without being art first. This is to say that without having art status conferred upon them (natural meaning,) readymades would not be anti-art (unnatural meaning.) X has to be in existence before anti-X can occur. While looking at a readymade, the addressee thinks: "It is clear to me that this is art because the artist says so. He is an artist to whom this gallery has granted an exhibition; therefore he must be an established artist. And his work must be art (i.e. entailment.) But this art is not what I am used to seeing (i.e. context.) It is contradicts (i.e. inferences began) the kind of art to which I am accustomed. It is not made by the artists, (i.e. inferring absence of authorship.) It is not what I would hang on my living room wall (i.e. inferring absence of taste.) So, he must be refuting the kind that I am used to seeing. He must be asserting that art doesn't have to be associated with taste, art is beyond pleasing the eye, etc. (i.e. implicatures.)"

Duchamp’s replacement of traditional and accepted modes with linguistic means, such as phonetic games, satirical remarks, provocative ironies, and facetious titles, which was formerly rejected by Greenbergian modernism, was not part of the entailment. As noted previously, entailment can only provide incomplete, limited context, it was not sufficient to fully uncover readymades’ implicatures. For such intended meaning to be accurately
decoded, addressees had to draw some inferences. The following sections, we shall examine these implicatures obtained as a result of inferences.

4.4 On Implicature

Implicatures are meanings that are successfully encoded without being explicitly stated. They are an inferred meaning typically with a reversed logical sense from that of the original statement; also known as non-truth preserving or unnatural.\textsuperscript{58} This concept of implicature and unnatural meaning\textsuperscript{59} was first theorized by the linguistic philosopher Paul Grice to account for the phenomenon in which the intended messages are accurately understood when they are expressed implicitly, or even contradictorily. This phenomenon is especially remarkable when we look at the way anti-art was operated – stating the positive to imply the negative on the part of the artist and the exact comprehension as such on the part of the addressee. Grice’s concept of implicature and unnatural meaning will be examined more thoroughly in the following sections after the issue of how inferences are drawn has been addressed. Nonetheless, of all the possible inferences that are associated with a statement, visually or linguistically, the ones that are specifically intended by the addressee are what constitute implicature. How implicatures are successfully inferred is based on the mutually shared contextual knowledge. I shall use sarcasm as an example. When one says “right” sarcastically, the word,
which is supposed to express agreement, now carries the reversed meaning; hence “non-truth preserving,” but the intended meaning of disagreement has to be inferred based on a mutually shared contextual knowledge. Perhaps the utterance prior to “right” is an exaggeration. Whatever the contextual knowledge is it must be mutually shared and it is a prerequisite for accurate interpretation. Otherwise, addressee will fail to uncover the implicatures. Consider the following sentence as another example:

It’s the tastes.60

The sentence entails that the speaker has tasted something but the context is ambiguous. “It’s the taste” on a Coca-Cola advertising billboard implies good taste that the beverage has, while “it’s the taste” means that the taste is not good when the speaker barely touches the food on the plate. The advertising billboard and the barely touched food are the context that is crucial to the correct interpretation of the same sentence. For readymades’ intended meaning to fully emerge or to make sense, just like understanding pragmatic meaning in speech, identifying the context is required. This kind of meaning is not part of the entailment and requires the hearer or viewer to draw an inference to correctly interpret the expression. These indirectly conveyed meanings or meanings conveyed through hints that require the common knowledge of context, known as implicature, were the linguistic concept that Duchamp applied to his readymades.

60 Example taken from Grundy, 70
There was a criterion in selecting readymades – total absence of taste. “The choice of readymades is always based on visual indifference,” as he put it, “and, at the same time, on the total absence of good or bad taste.”[^61] In addition, there was no craft involved; meaning to say that there was total absence of Duchamp’s craftsmanship. However, readymades did involve the artist’s linguistic skills. Initially, it appeared that Duchamp intended all of his readymades to bear an elaborate title because he felt that the literary link between the object and the title gave readymades some justification that was beyond the mere act of selection.[^62] In other words, this justification came from the pragmatic function that expressed meanings, namely implicatures. Furthermore, what could have come as a realization or inspiration that such implicitly expressed meaning within an art object could be inferred and consequentially understood by the addressee was *Nude Descending a Staircase*, (whose implicatures will be discussed in further detail in the following sections,) because of the furor caused by its title. Although Duchamp originally did not want the titles to have a direct relationship to the objects he selected,[^63] he soon learned that the titles could play the role of a speech act that solicited the most desirable outcome; meaning to say that the idiomatic quality of the titles could convey his anti-definition statement. “The readymade can be seen as a sort of irony,” as he explained in an interview with George Heard Hamilton

[^62]: Naumann, 63
[^63]: Naumann, 63
in New York, “or an attempt at showing the futility of trying to define art.”

Therefore, Duchamp presenting his readymades to the art world in a museological setting was making two enunciative statements simultaneously—“this is art,” and “this is anti-art.” Whether readymades were meant to be art or anti-art depends on at which angle, also known as common ground, readymades are looked. As discussed earlier, following de Duve’s logic of translating visual art to an ostensive statement, every art object is thus committed to a speech act, i.e. the function of the statement. In Duchamp’s case, the readymades’ speech act was fundamentally claiming the right to be art; hence “this is art.” “This is anti art” was claiming the right to be art by undermining the accepted modes. Returning to the notion that readymades were statements of anti-art, our understanding of them as such can be broken down into three aspects and their respective reasoning: anti-craft because readymades were not crafted by Duchamp, anti-aesthetic because readymades were not associated with taste, and anti-modernism because of the readymades’ incorporation of linguistics and focus on mental aspects and being beyond mere optical experience. How an addressee can come to these interpretations, however, would require him/her to draw some inferences based on the common knowledge of context – common ground or premises for inference, as required by implicatures. The following sections contain various interpretations of Duchamp’s art and the inferences that gave rise to such interpretations. These possible inferences are also what Duchamp expected to be the narrowed-down premise or premises that his

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64 The interview was published in *The Art Newspaper*, London, vol. III, no. 15 (February 1992,)

65 De Duve, 66.
addressee would reach; meaning to say that Duchamp had to evaluate and assess the existing mutually-shared contextual knowledge for the premises to be narrowed down. These interpretations and inferences were extracted from the writings of art historians and art critics of Duchampian art. Note that in order to demonstrate how inferences were drawn in Duchampian language, terms like visual parallels, phonetic cues, are used here to classify each inferential type. Each art piece nonetheless consisted of the interplay of more than one of these types. Neither are all the available means and imperatives included in the following paragraphs.

4.4.1 Visual Parallels

As briefly discussed earlier, the success of *Nude Descending a Staircase* was indebted to Duchamp's familiarity with the conventionally established intersubjectivity in the art world; namely who can confer art status upon what. Apart from the entailed meaning "this is art," there was a visual projection that immediately established a common ground. *Nude* was apparently done in a Cubistic mode. It is imaginable that Duchamp’s addressees could draw an inference that it was a Cubist painting because it echoed the fragmented and angular planes typical of those of Cubist paintings prior to *Nude*. The second word of the title immediately contradicted this intersubjectivity. Quite imposingly, "descending" suggested movement instead of stillness. An addressee could draw greater inferences if he/she had seen Marey’s

Lai, 61
chronographs (figure 21) or Eakins and Muybridge’s photographs all of which documented successive movements because the lines, the repetitive planes and the white dotted lines in *Nude* resembled the movement found in these photographs. At the same time, the painting had a Futuristic feel. The gold metallic planes were composed and clustered together making it appear to be robotic or machine-like. This machine-like quality thereby resulted in another common ground and inference that an addressee could draw – Futurism (figure 22). Again the title was in breach of this pre-determined, recognized characteristic because it contained a traditional subject. This was the pre-readymade example of subverting the established artistic modes by applying them. He used Cubist means, including the limited palette, to express his personal interest in movement, which was contrary to the typical subject matter of the Cubists – static form analytically rendered in a series of lines and planes. Additionally, he subverted Futurism by means of futuristic examination of locomotion while using a subject that the futurists regarded as outdated – a nude. The painting had no anatomically recognizable human figure, only a series of geometrical shapes. And yet, the title told the viewers that it was a nude. Not only did the contradictions discussed above implicate the ambivalent relationship with Cubism and Futurism, they also moderately implicated Duchamp’s anti-art sentiment, or refusal to remain within the techniques of an “established” (i.e. “defined”) style. Duchamp made sure that this implicitly expressed speech act, i.e. disagreeing definition or anti-definition,

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66 Arnason, 191  
67 Arnason, 191
would be successfully inferred by visually projecting the familiar Cubistic mode, then defying it with an un-Cubistic subject matter – locomotion. Likewise, he visually projected Futuristic mode but simultaneously flouting it with a nude, which was conventionally rejected by Futurists.

Figure 21. Marey’s “Man Running”

Figure 22. Balla’s “Abstract Speed + Sound” (Futurism)
In 1920, Duchamp had a window custom-made and entitled it *Fresh Widow* (figure 23.) With his specifications, a carpenter made a window.\(^{68}\) Similar to a French window, it has two vertically oriented rectangle panels, each with a knob visually suggesting that the panels could be opened. Each pane consisted of four square panes framed with wooden trim. However, this window was not a functional object because, firstly, the window was miniaturized; and secondly, the window panes were not transparent. The viewer

\(^{68}\) Naumann, 85
cannot see through the panes because they were secretively covered. The two very prominent features of *Fresh Widow* were linguistic manipulation and gender reassignment.

Across the window sill, inscribed in black paper-tape letters, was the sentence “*Fresh Widow Copyright Rrose Selavy 1920.*” Duchamp’s challenging the requirement of artists’ craft, or authorship, by means of readymades is a well-known fact. The standard “rule” in the art world was that the art object on exhibit was to be a product of the artist’s direct creation and manipulation by means of his/her own hands. Such direct hands-on art-creating skill was known as craft. Duchamp successfully made the point that the craft of the artist, or authorship, was not required in the art world. All that was required was the artist’s choice. Readymades were chosen but not made by Duchamp. This significance of choice and the subverted importance of craft were conveyed a little differently in the case of *Fresh Widow*. Duchamp distanced himself from the art object by consciously hiring a carpenter to create the art object instead of going to a junkyard or a store to pick up something pre-made with the total absence of his specifications.69 The fascination of eliminating the need for craft or authorship was additionally evident in *Fresh Widow* because, suddenly, there was a transsexual alter-ego, Rrose Sélavy, whose signature was on the art object instead of Duchamp’s. In the Fall of 1920, Duchamp dressed in drag and asked Man Ray to photograph him posing in the guise of his female alter-ego, Rrose Sélavy (figure 24.) Rrose Sélavy was a pseudonym that Duchamp would use to

69 <http://arthist.binghamton.edu/duchamp/FreshWidow.html>

Lai, 65
sign in almost all of his works in the next twenty years. His idea was originally to take a Jewish name because it would change his religion from one to another. Then, he decided that the change would be more “basic” if it involved his gender. The first work that bore this name was *Fresh Widow*. This is to say that the artist disassociated himself from *Fresh Widow* but at the same time claimed a copyright for a work that did not originate from his craftsmanship. The following excerpt from Nesbit clearly describes the complexity of the authorship and copyright.

“Duchamp has claimed a copyright for a window that is not only plagiarized but by definition not eligible for copyright: the window is an industrial good in the eyes of the law; if suitably innovative it might be patented but never given the ‘droit d’auteur,’ not even in America. The copyright was a bluff.”

This gesture of anti-authorship, apart from signing a pseudonym, was experimented even before the production of *Fresh Widow*. In the letter to his sister dated around the 15th of January 1916, (at about this time, as revealed in his letter, Duchamp came up with the name “readymade,”) while explaining the bicycle wheel, the bottle rack, and the snow shovel as objects that he had purchased as “sculpture[s] already made,” he gave her specific instructions on how to add the inscriptions for his snow shovel and bottle rack. Since his sister was in Paris while he was in the United States, Duchamp declared these objects

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70 Duchamp explained in an unpublished interview with the Janis Family in 1953. See Naumann, 85
71 Molly Nesbit, “Last Words (Rilke, Wittgenstein, Duchamp,)” *Art History* Vol.21, No. 4 (Dec. 1998), 63
as “readymade[s] from a distance.”

Although by the time the letter reached his sister, she probably had discarded those readymades; and therefore, neither the irony nor the collaboration – the forgery of Duchamp’s signature achieved with the instructions given to the forger by Duchamp himself – was not accomplished.

Not only did the animate *widow* in the title contradict, hence denied, the inanimate art object, the title of *Fresh Widow* also served as a linguistic pun on “French window” in English and “C’est la vie” in French. These inferences of phonetics, ideogram (because of the similarity in letter arrangement) and visual

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72 Letter from Duchamp to Suzanne Duchamp, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
73 Naumann, 65
(it was a French window after all,) set off a chain of interpretations. Widow referred to a female and she was in mourning as black is the color of mourning. She was the opposite of a transparent window. One could not know what was happening inside her. The word “fresh” used as a metaphor to imply “being ready again” for sexual pleasure, the widow could be inferred to be entering to the physical state of sexual readiness. As suggested by Albert Cook in his essay entitled “The Meta Irony of Marcel Duchamp,” the widow with nasal congestion as a result of weeping couldn’t help nasalizing “French window;” the term would thus sound like “fresh widow,” causing a humiliation. Cook took on the persona of the widow to come up with this monologue in order to further demonstrate Fresh Widow’s visual metaphor, or more appropriately, to translate Duchampean visual language. “I am a new widow, and the fact that I have been weeping actually reveals rather than conceals the fact that I am or am soon to be scandalously ‘fresh.’ I can’t help saying all this, and my very helplessness becomes an appeal with sexual overtones that makes me transparent in a way that the particular French window I am trying vainly to indicate is not.”

The ambivalent relationships between Duchamp and Cubism, and between him and Futurism was further echoed in the work L.H.O.O.Q., (Mona Lisa with a Moustache, figure 25;) but this time it was between him and Dada. Revolutionary sensibility, anti-tradition vehemence, and the biting criticism

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75 Cook, 264
against the senseless barbarities of World War I in Europe were embodied in a movement that resulted in an art revolt known as Dadaism. The hypocrisy of spiritual values in art, bourgeois society, and the conservatism of traditional thought were attacked. Despite Christianity, museums, and the establishment, civilization had disintegrated into violence and destruction. Duchamp’s iconoclasm was naturally in agreement with such sentiments. Readymades were intended to begin life as objects of unmitigated mundanity: the urinal, bottle rack, snow shovel, etc.\(^\text{76}\) He tested the limit of public tastes by pushing, and subsequently transgressing, boundaries of the art world. Quite similar to the idea of the Cubists’ puzzling assemblage of incongruous juxtapositions of images and letters, Dadaists, such as Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) in Hanover, made collages of littered bus tickets and other scraps with words on them. Absurdities and non sequiturs were used to create artworks and performances that defied any intellectual analysis. Found objects were randomly included in sculptures and installations. Random letters were picked up to form poetry. However, New York Dada with which Duchamp was allied was less overtly political. In the mid summer of 1919, Duchamp stayed with his friend in Paris, Picabia, who was deeply involved in the Dada movement. It was ironic that at first Duchamp rejected the idea of being officially associated with any art group or movement, but, as a result of the shared sympathies for Dadaists’ iconoclasm, Duchamp made \textit{L.H.O.O.Q.} that was designated as Dada’s “most potent and enduring symbol” by the surrealist, Salvador Dali.\(^\text{77}\) Indeed, \textit{L.H.O.O.Q.} was

\(^{76}\) <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/duch/hd_duch.htm>

\(^{77}\) Naumman, 81
regarded as the most succinct expression of pure Dada sensitivities, even though
the piece revealed some ambivalence on the part of the artist. At a glance,
*L.H.O.O.Q.* seemed to have the Dadaists' random alphabetical nonsense. But
this phonetic game conveyed quite an overt colloquial profanity. *LHOOQ*
could phonetically be transcribed as “lhook” or “look” pronounced with a
whisper, which in turn prompted the addressee to look. The fact that the two
O’s were together causes the decoding of this cryptic title to have some
ideogrammatic inclination. But since each letter was punctuated with a period,
the result of a careful ‘look’ is that these letters with periods had to be initials of
a phrase, namely an abbreviation.78 Then, the addressee would attempt to
decode the phrase by means of some outlandish and nonsensical English or
French sentences such as “Let Her Outpaced Others Quickly,” “Ladle Hot
Onions On Quahogs,” or “La Honte Ouvre Onze Querelles.”79 A more logical,
but indecorous, sense could gradually be produced by enunciating the sequential
letters with a little readjustment of rhythm and pace. *L.H.O.O.Q.* would now
read “elle a chaud au cul,”80 which means “she has a hot ass.” The resultant
effect was the immediate disappearance of Dadaist alphabetical nonsense, but
the iconoclastic and anti-canonic sentiment was retained. To Dada, nonsense
was to be celebrated. Social and artistic contexts were to be stretched, rejected,
but left in place; meaning to say that what the society and the museological
institutions had accepted to be art was to be challenged. Conventions were to be
pushed and attacked; but at the same time, traces of convention were left behind

78 Schwartz, 29
79 Interpretation extracted from Cook, 267
80 Cook, 267
so that the attack on the conservatives and the bourgeoisie would not be missed. Duchamp’s L.H.O.O.Q. did just about everything Dada set forth to do; except celebrating the nonsense.

Figure 25. *L.H.O.O.Q.*

The mutually shared contextual knowledge between Duchamp and his addressee was a vital requirement for accurate interpretation. For *Fresh Widow*, such knowledge ranged from the art world’s requirement of the artist’s craft to copyright law, from the concept of not any window but a French window to the
context typically surrounding a widow, and from sexuality to eroticism. For
*L.H.O.O.Q.*, the required knowledge ranged from phonetic fluency in French to
Renaissance high art.

**4.4.3 Visual Ironies with Visual Imperatives**

The effect of irony in Duchamp’s art was often projected by
contextualizing the work, and simultaneously, suspending the work from
context. He dislodged Mona Lisa from her glorious Renaissance cultural
background and referred to those cultural elements by applying profanity to
them. As *L.H.O.O.Q.* phonetically suggested, the body part that was not shown
in the image was a reason why she was smiling. The work of Duchamp was not
selecting the cheap reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* but the
childish gesture of putting a beard and moustache on it with crayon. This
desecration began as a Dadaist gesture, the cryptic abbreviation that
phonetically, as well as satirically, imposed a derogatory remark. This
irreverent and derogatory French remark on an Italian masterpiece that defined
high art immediately de-mystified the enigmatic smile of the sitter. At the same
time, Duchamp de-eroticized the sitter’s eroticism by rendering her, not
masculine, but transvestite.81 Duchamp repeatedly applied these contradictions
of gender reassignment and transvestism to himself and trivialized them in his
other readymades such as *Monte Carlo Bond* and *Fresh Widow* on which
Duchamp signed as his transvestite alter-ego Rrose Sélavy. These gestures of

81 Cook, 267
high-art negation, de-eroticization and transvestism projected Duchampean ironies and iconoclasm that, to be fully understood, require inferences on the part of the addressee. The set of premises from which the data were elicited by the addressee to interpret the intended meaning consisted of knowledge of the French language, of the high art of the Renaissance, and of the political, as well as the cultural, criticism of the reigning values of conservatism that led Europe to the devastation of World War I.

Duchamp’s art, as he put it (page 16,) was to transfer the visual expression of words to signs similar to the ideogrammatic nature of Chinese language.82 There was, however, a difference between Chinese characters and Duchamp’s ideograms. The latter were more comprehensive and arbitrary, meaning to say that the visual interpretations kept multiplying in a very personal and subjective manner. The most appropriate way to describe Duchamp’s art is that the verbal ironized the visual and vice versa. Irony typically triggers the response of the addressee by indicating the contradictions in the utterance of the addresser. By circulating the irony back to the art work itself, Duchamp’s ironies had to rely on context. Context is a vital portion of the verbal-to-visual and visual-to-verbal equation in Duchampean art. The title of the urinal, Fountain (page 46,) suggested water source and it was a euphemism for urination. It raised a contradiction – the water in the fountain (which was used for drinking) but it could also be an analogy of urination (water being discarded.) Not only was this contradiction of visual and verbal, it was also a

82 Schwartz, 29.
contradiction to the context. There was no plumbing in the gallery in which the urinal was exhibited.\footnote{Cook, 268} In addition, even if there were plumbing and one would have been able to use the urinal, it would not be a pleasant experience as the urinal was inverted. As demonstrated, such visual interpretation kept multiplying in a very subjective and arbitrary manner; subjective and arbitrary because it was a representation of a not-all-inclusive feature of readymades. Urinals were not designed for women. This was an ultimate Duchampean irony because Greenbergian modernists asserted that art was all-inclusive and it was a mere optical experience. And yet, this irreverent art object made the optical experience a transient factor, and the inferred meanings and interpretations, although homogenous, were reached at varying degrees depending on the gender of the individual because the urinal is a gender-specific object.

Fountain had a signature that read "R. Mutt." This inscription set off another chain of discourse. "R. Mutt" could mean Richard Mutt, Duchamp's pseudonym composed out of an association with the Mutt and Jeff cartoons, or the pejorative slang for dog.\footnote{Cook, 268} A dog could not use a urinal due to habitual and physiological reasons. Neither can the piece be appreciated by a dog as art because culture and art do not apply to dogs; neither should they be applied to humans anyway since they had been battling each other.\footnote{Cook, 268} Resembling a wheel spinning back to the point of origin, this statement abutted Dada while flouting randomness in Dada. Furthermore, the inverted urinal could not be used as such.
because there was no plumbing; neither could it be a fountain because it could not produce water. *Fountain* thereby defied definition visually and lexically; as did the *Bicycle Wheel* (figure 26.) In October of 1915, it was reported that Duchamp “installed a bicycle wheel on a kitchen table between the four legs of an upturned chair.”\(^8^6\) This report might have been wrong, or it is possible that Duchamp substituted the inverted chair with a kitchen stool. This conclusion was drawn as we could only catch a glimpse of this piece from a photograph of Duchamp’s studio. Both the alleged upturned chair and the original piece in the photograph were lost. But based on the photograph, we can still see how its visual imperatives operated.

The wheel was visually present but there was no reference to a bicycle. Neither would the addressee or the art object get anywhere even if the wheel kept spinning. The stool was apparently visible and yet it didn’t offer a seat. The wheel and the stool were denying each other. The stool, although allowed rotation, restrained the mobility of the wheel, while the wheel occupied the seat and thus stripped off the function of the stool. The Duchampean anti-definition program was executed visually and lexically. Or, his anti-definition meaning, which was implicitly stated but accurately understood, required mutually shared contextual knowledge or a set of premises that was accessible to the addressee (by means of calculation and analysis) and the addressee (by means of inferences.)

\(^8^6\) Naumann, 63
5. A LOGICIAN PROBLEM

The Duchampean reality of irony within irony was linguistically defined; agreeing by disagreeing (and vice versa,) and expressing the negative by stating the positive (and vice versa.) In language, this contrast is commonly known as sarcasm. Readymades can be said to be a kind of visual sarcasm. Returning to the implicit meaning of readymades, the anti-establishment messages in Duchamp’s visual sarcasm were inferentially derived. The inferential process has been illustrated in the preceding paragraphs in which Duchamp’s arguments in visual language and the understanding of the points he
made were analyzed. At this juncture, we have examined this concept of implicature, an unnatural meaning “recovered as an inductive inference,” such as the way we understand the sarcastic remark of a seemingly agreeing “right” by means of context. An inductive inference is to reach to a conclusion by narrowing down a set of premises to the one premise most appropriately applicable; meaning to say from the mutually shared contextual knowledge, the addressee of readymades drew an inference that was most directly relatable. This concept of implicature was first theorized by the linguistic philosopher Paul Grice. According to Grice, what is conveyed comprises two parts – what is said (entailment) and what is implied (implicature.)

The following table illustrates the process of interpretation of readymades from entailment to implicature as Grice theorized.

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87 Grundy, 105
88 Grundy, 81
**Art object** | **Entailment (partial meaning)** | **premises for inferences** | **Implicature (complete meaning)**  
---|---|---|---  
**Fresh Widow** | Duchamp acquired the authority to confer art status, and his readymades were qualified to have art status conferred upon them. (Same for all institutionalized art objects.) Fundamentally, “this is Art.” | French window, carpenter’s creation, copyright for Rrose Sélavy, etc. | Anti-craft, etc.  
**L.H.O.O.Q.** | | Gender reassignment, French derogatory slur on Renaissance high art, etc. | Anti-canonic, etc.  
**Fountain** | | Water, urination, plumbing, male culture, repugnant, desecration, etc. | Anti-aesthetic, etc.  
Any one of the above | Linguistic punning, phonetic reference, ideogrammatic function, pragmatic function, etc. | Anti-modernism  

Here, we stumble upon an algorithmic problem. Between the entailment of readymades (what was said) and the implicature of readymades (what was implied,) there is a missing link. Or, between “this is art” (entailment) and “this is anti-art” (implicature) there is a complication. Given the scenario of departing from entailment to arriving at implicature, the latter is reached through inferences. However, implicature does not nullify the entailment. How did the addressee come to the conclusion that readymades, which Duchamp called art consistent with what readymades entailed, were meant to be anti-art? How could he label something “art” and simultaneously label that thing “anti-art?” Wouldn’t that thing be anti-itself, in which case denouncing itself?\(^\text{89}\) In

\(^{89}\) Although this perfectly conforms to Duchampean meta-irony paradigm, there is a pragmatic solution, which further supports Duchamp’s idea of decoding art as language.
the logical, algorithmic reasoning, if $x$ is $y$, $x$ cannot be anti $y$. $x = y$, while $x \neq y$ would not make logical sense. Readymades being Duchamp's anti-art statement was a well-founded perception on the part of art historians. We, by means of context, agreed that Duchamp’s readymades were created to express the artist’s discontentment and disagreement with the establishment. He intended to challenge the conventional view of how art should be defined. Therefore, the definition of “anti-art” by means of a sociological framework as put forth by art historians, such as George Dickie, was consistent with Duchamp’s motivation for making readymades. Therefore, that readymades are anti-art makes perfect sense intellectually. However, how could Duchamp be the committer of the statement “this is anti-art” after he had already claimed that readymades were art? How could he commit to two contradicting statements of “this is art” and “this is anti-art” simultaneously? Nonetheless, intellectually, the addressee understood that readymades were art, and simultaneously, they were anti-art.90

To reconcile this art-anti-art contradiction, Grice’s theory of implicature will be applicable. The purpose of this application is to provide an account for the understanding of visual art expression when the intended meanings were not expressed with conventional means. A pragmatically viable resolution of such contradiction will further validate Duchamp’s logic of interpreting art by engaging the ideogrammatic deciphering of language such as poetry reading; hence, giving rise to a new dimension to view art. Language was critiqued from the perspectives of visual art as demonstrated in modernist paintings. Visual art

90 If there were individuals who do not agree that readymades were anti-art, that would be a different topic dealing with art-definition and its criticism, and therefore not relevant to pragmatics.
is now being critiqued from the linguistic, or more precisely pragmatic, point of view as Duchamp demonstrated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entailment</th>
<th>(\neq)</th>
<th>Implicature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;what I make is art.&quot;</td>
<td>(\neq)</td>
<td>&quot;What I make is anti-art.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problem

"If I call it art, how do you know it is anti-art?"

Contradiction between what is said and what is implied, as Duchamp had proven, is very common. First, let us apply meta-linguistic method once again to examine this phenomenon, then, apply the same reasoning to this art/anti-art contradiction. In an abortion rights campaign, for example, there is a banner with the printed line "pro-choice = pro-life." We know that pro-choice is pro-abortion whereas pro-life is anti-abortion. With that banner, we know that the speaker of "pro-choice = pro-life" does not mean the two parties are the same. But logically, or in terms of entailment, the equal sign means the same. How do we come to that understanding that having the choice of abortion is saving a life, namely that of the mother, and the line is actually a pro-abortion statement? How do we understand the intended meaning that is not actually said?
In order to answer these questions, Grice theorized that there are two kinds of meanings of utterances – natural meaning and unnatural meaning.91 In Duchamp’s case, there were natural and unnatural meanings of artistic expressions. Natural meanings are known as entailment – meanings that are always present on every occasion when an expression occurs. They are not contextually bound. In visual language, for example, a man on a cross is always Christ on the crucifix meaning sacrifice and redemption. Unnatural meanings are associated with the sentence from which they may be inferred; such a sentence resembles a springboard for inference. Their inferences are context-based and are not part of the entailment. Non-natural meanings are always the intended meanings, which are intended to be “hidden” or implicit. In visual language for example, the variety of subtle or bold gestures and facial expressions in Leonardo da Vinci’s The Last Supper had the implicit meaning of identifying the figures and their respective responses to the news that Christ was to be betrayed and arrested, while the setting and seating arrangement were entailment – Christ’s last supper before the crucifixion. The addressee has to draw an inference to “uncover” the intended meanings. (Note that whether or not the addressee and viewer successfully “uncover” the implicit meanings is not the point here. In fact, they very often fail to “uncover” these meanings, both in speech and visual language. For the sake of the argument in this section, we are only examining successfully “uncovered” meanings.)

91 Grundy, 73
Returning to the above example:

"pro-choice = pro-life"

The statement is a positive statement, whose entailment is to agree that pro-life is indeed pro-choice. However, acknowledging that pro-life is pro-choice is not the intended meaning. Therefore, entailment is not contextually bound. We will fail to arrive at the accurate interpretation if we count solely on entailment. The hearer has to draw an inference. Based on context, namely a campaign that supports women’s rights to have an abortion, that statement is in fact to refute "pro-life," (i.e. disagreeing with anti-abortion,) in which case the intended meaning has been uncovered. Grice called this behavioral phenomenon ‘The Cooperative Principle.’ The Cooperative Principle basically describes that when we communicate we project the right amount of information, relevant information only, at the right time, and in the right sequence. The mutual objective for the speaker/artist and hearer/viewer is to obtain the most desirable interpretation as a result of the preferred expression. For both parties to achieve this common goal, the calculated amount of information or expression at any given time is necessary. Consequently, Duchamp made limited opposing statements in each readymade. The means by which Duchamp did so was consistent with Grice’s Cooperative Principle. Meeting the requirement of the right amount at a time, each readymade carried only one or two anti-tradition statements. To be anti-canonic, there was a Mona Lisa with beard and moustache. To be anti-aesthetic, there was a repugnant urinal completely

92 Marmaridou, 226
disassociating artistic taste. To be anti-craft, there was a transvestite alter-ego signing a window made by a carpenter in lieu of Duchamp. Linearity is another requirement for the above-said common goal. \( X \) has to come into existence before anti-\( X \) can occur. Modernism had to be popularized first before Duchamp could be anti-modernism. Greenberg had to make a set of modernist rules before Duchamp could break them. Grice’s Cooperative Principle was accountable for the addressee’s uncovering the non-natural meanings of readymades that Duchamp intended to express but left implicit.

5.1 The Solution

We have discussed that entailment is not contextually bound, whereas implicature is, and so far we have demonstrated that implicature being successfully decoded is a result of the interactants’ common goal of gaining the most desirable outcome from the preferred expression. Duchamp’s statements of anti-establishment nature conformed to Grice’s Cooperative Principle. For Duchamp’s addressees to recognize his implicatures was actually a result of drawing an inductive inference to reach the most likely meaning in the given context. An inductive inference reaches a conclusion by narrowing down a set of premises to the most appropriate application of one. The one that fits best is the one we infer. However, when there is additional data that would result in a contradicting conclusion, that inference can be cancelled.\(^\text{93}\) For example:

\(^{93}\) Grundy, 80
I have a cat.

The most appropriate inference to draw is that I have at least one cat and not more. Without a context, we infer one cat and not more. But if there is additional information that is inconsistent with this inference, namely two cats, the original inference will be negated. Consider this dialogue and its context:

A: I got cat hair all over my suit.
B: You have a cat?
A. Yes, I have a cat, in fact, I have two.

It is grammatical for A to negate his first sentence – “I have a cat” – by adding the second sentence that is inconsistent with the first. However, it is absolutely ungrammatical and illogical to say “Yes, I have a cat, in fact, I have none.” The sentence “I have a cat” entails at least one cat and implies not more than one. If there is any attempt to deny the entailment, the natural meaning, the sentence will be contradicting and ungrammatical. Conversely, as far as implicature is concerned, because it is an inductive inference, it can be negated with additional information. To negate the sentence “I have a cat”, in terms of entailment, the direction will have to be reversed, namely none, because the sentence entails not more than one. To negate it in terms of implicature, the direction of negation is forward, namely, two, because it implicates not less than one.
To negate entailment: I have cat, in fact I have none. (not grammatical)

To negate implicature: I have a cat, in fact, I have two. (grammatical)

As a conclusion, the characteristics of entailment and implicature are that the conventional meaning of the former cannot be cancelled without causing a contradiction; and the meaning of the latter can be cancelled because it derives from an inductive inference that the addressee draws. Another example is schematically shown as follows.

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He is good

not better or best (entailment)
not bad or worse (implicature)
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He is good

in fact he is worse. (Entailment cannot be cancelled without being ungrammatical.)
in fact he is the best. (Implicature can be cancelled because it is an inference.)
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5.2 Applying the Solution to Readymades

In the previous section, I raised a few questions about the logic of Duchamp labeling something “art” and simultaneously negating that object with the label “anti-art.” The object would thus illogically be anti-itself. Now with the above-said reasoning of the distinctive characteristics of entailment and implicature, Duchamp in fact could, and did, negate the inductive inference, which the viewers initially drew that readymades were art. The following is to test their entailment and implicature the same way that was theorized by Grice discussed previously. The entailment of readymades was that they were art. To negate the entailment, the direction had to be reversed, namely neither art nor anti art; and consequentially creating a contradiction. To negate the implicature the direction is forward and the inductively inferred meaning can be cancelled out. The implied meaning was that readymades were indeed art and could be another kind of art called anti-art art.
There is a significant implication in this conformity of Duchampean contradiction to the principles of Grice’s theory of conversational implicature. The art versus anti-art contradiction can be solved by means of pragmatic theory. Not only is there a strong link between art and linguistics, the idea of decoding artistic expression by means of methods used in linguistic interpretation is valid. Duchamp successfully proved that artistic and linguistic interpretations, as well as expression, were a result of similar cognitive aptitude. To quote him again, “art is the field where language, thought, and vision act on one another.”\textsuperscript{94} What started off as an ought-to-be is now a fact. As readymades proved, art not just should be, but could be, read, deciphered, and interpreted in the way language is construed, and readymades were not

\textsuperscript{94} Schwartz, 69
exclusively retinal or visual; they also had to do "with the grey matter, with our urge for understanding." To Duchamp, the concept of understanding art was a phenomenon of ephemera that kept eluding the definition of the institution, which was a striking parallel to linguistics — there is no definitive standard implicature attached to any linguistic statement and utterance as long as there is the element of varying context. Remarkably, art and language cannot be disassociated from context.

6. Pragmatics as Inspiration for Readymades

There were several pre-readymade events that Duchamp experienced that I will present in the following paragraphs as evidence that Duchamp adopted from pragmatics, or at least inspired by pragmatics, that meaning could be encoded in art and decoded by viewers. After these experiences, Duchamp effectively applied pragmatics to his readymades.

Painted in 1910, from a stylistic point of view, the Portrait of Dr. Dumouchel (pg. 42) was a Fauvist painting. However, in addition to the Fauvist technique in this painting, there was a mysterious atmosphere connected with the universe of Symbolism. The left hand of the sitter was radiating a mauve halo that was not visible in retinal reality. By reference to the writings of Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbetter, the halo was explained to be the auras.

95 Duchamp, 136.
manifest themselves in different colors. In response to these explanations, Duchamp later wrote:

"The ‘halo’ around the hand, which is not expressly inspired by Dumouchel’s hand, indicates my subconscious anxieties concerning progress towards a meta-Realism. It has no precise significance, nor explanation, other than the satisfaction of a need for ‘the miraculous’ which preceding the Cubist period."\(^\text{96}\)

This means to say that Duchamp showed interests in detaching himself from the perceivable though the retina. He wanted to move beyond Cubism, which is also appropriate to say that he had lost interests in other accepted modes of that time as well, such as Fauvism or Impressionism, and wanted his art to go beyond the eye and "back to the service of the mind." Subsequently, plagued by the evocations of literature, Duchamp made *Paradise* (1910-11, pg. 42.) Here, a feeling of unease was projected through the male nude’s hand shamefully covering his genitals. As if to evoke the difficulties of love, there was a lack of harmony between the male and female figures, as well as between them and the natural environment. These visual tensions were known to be the Symbolic (or signifier) to the Real (or the signified); namely the despondency of bachelorhood.\(^\text{97}\) Duchamp was also conjectured to have used several symbols from alchemy when he painted *Young Man and Girl in Spring* (pg. 25.) Arturo Schwartz interpreted the implicatures of this unfinished piece to be the scene in

\(^{96}\) Ramirez, 255
\(^{97}\) The discontentment of Duchamp’s bachelorhood was also symbolized by the *Bottle Rack* of 1914 and it was discussed in Ramirez, 37
Genesis in which Adam and Eve were picking apples or some fruit from the tree, and at the same time, the crystal ball in the center with the brother and sister to be the alchemical incest, and the union of opposites whose fruit was the original androgyne. Many such interpretations involving symbols from alchemy were published, such as those discussed by Ulf Linde and Golding. However, these theories were denied by Duchamp himself as in his famous statement made to Lebel: "If I have practiced alchemy, I have done so in the only way that it can be practiced today, this is to say, without knowing it." This statement was interpreted as Duchamp had wished to say that he lacked the great wisdom of alchemy while acknowledging the existence of alchemy. One did not have to be an expert of alchemy to unknowingly practice it. In other words, unbeknownst to him, the symbols might have been unconsciously embedded in his paintings without any conscious intention but, at the same time, projected to the viewers. This is a very significant event because it coincides with the theory of Duchamp's comprehension of the mechanism of pragmatics in art. If an unconscious and unintended meaning (i.e. alchemy) was decoded in his painting on the part of the viewer, why not encode a meaning that was intended, cleverly designed and implicitly expressed for the viewer to decode and interpret, (for example, irony, anti-canonic, anti-definition, etc.)? Here, my conjecture is that Duchamp learned and further comprehended the

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98 Ramirez, 255
100 Ramirez, 255
101 Ramirez, 255

Lai, 90
pragmatic function in art. However, this was not the first event that would link Duchamp to pragmatics.

In 1910, a friend from high school introduced Duchamp to Max Bergmann, a young German artist who was relatively unknown. Bergmann wanted to study art and wanted Duchamp to recommend him some schools. Duchamp told Bergmann about La Palette where the latter eventually enrolled. Because Bergmann was unfamiliar with the art scene in Paris, Duchamp offered his company to visit some good galleries and to see some exhibitions together. They even spent a memorable evening of entertainment at a fancy bordello on the rue Pigalle in Montmartre. Upon the development of this friendship, Duchamp presented a gift to Bergmann. It was a *bilboquet* (figure 27), a toy consisting of a wooden ball with a decoratively carved stick inserted into it. On the surface of the ball, Duchamp inscribed the following:

*Bilboquet / Souvenir de Paris / A mon ami M. Bermann / Duchamp printemps 1910.*

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102 Naumann, 40.
It is imaginable that to say that the *bilboquet* was not an arbitrary object that was fit to be a gift to Bergmann; and that it must have been an object that would uniquely convey the memories of their shared experiences. Since *bilboquet* is a game of dexterity; the ball is to be thrown up and caught by impaling it back onto the stick, to Duhcamp, it could possibly carry a sexual connotation – with its clearly male (stick) and female (ball) parts. The phallic form (the stick) yearning for its complement (the hole in the ball) and completing the action of insertion (sexual intercourse,)\(^{103}\) could be a metaphor referring to the quest for companionship at the bordello that both of the young bachelors visited. Perhaps this was the first readymade because three years later he repeated the gesture of transforming mundane, everyday objects into art by putting his signature on

Though we do not know the exact meaning Duchamp was expressing to Bergmann, being an intellectual artist as Duchamp, he must have understood the importance of the mutually shared contextual knowledge between him and Bergmann in order for the former to encode meaning in the form of a sculpture (i.e. *bilboquet*) and for his addressee, namely Bergmann, to decode the meaning. The mechanism would later be considered and applied while producing readymades. The meaning embedded and subsequently expressed in the form of an object could be said to be an alternative to language in a conventional sense. Meaning could be conveyed by means of a gesture or a form of art. Art would be a medium for the encoding and decoding of meaning, and therefore could carry a function and could not be a mere retinal phenomenon.

In addition to this emergence of new function, a new visual vocabulary emerged as well, or more precisely, a new source for inference to be drawn to reach an implicature, for example, visual parallels for movement and direction (as discussed earlier.) The following year, 1911, Duchamp painted the *Coffee Mill* (pg. 42) to decorate his brother's kitchen. Before painting, he made a sketch, which was followed very closely in the final version. A depiction of a coffee grinder was in both the sketch and the final version. The depiction was a vertical cross-section of the coffee grinder. Its internal components were rendered quite faithfully in the fashion of Cubism. On the mid left side of the device there was the wide stream through which the coffee bean would be funneled to a pair of tiered grinding wheels. The freshly ground coffee would

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104 Naumann, 41
emerge in the drawer positioned at the base of the machine. However, an arrow indicating the direction of the rotation of the coffee grinder handle was added at the top of both the sketch and the painting. Somewhat similar to the succession of positions contained in one visually captured moment in *Dulcinea* (pg. 42,) the successive movement of the coffee grinder handle was also painted in the same way. The depiction of movement and the arrow, predating Futurism, were a huge departure from the rigid visual vocabulary of Cubism. These details of movement and internal components have been heralded by art historians to be the first mechanist painting and, most importantly, one of the first paintings in the history of art to depict movement in a static image.¹⁰⁵ This invention became a new graphic language, namely the visual parallels discussed earlier as an inference to be drawn in order to reach the implicature, which was reused a few months later in *Nude Descending a Staircase.*

7. Conclusion

From his pre-readymade works, Duchamp’s interests in linguistic is evident. The use of Chinese ideograms, words, or symbols arbitrarily signifying abstract meaning that is recognizable only to the mind but not to the eye is parallel to his replacement of the recognizable object, or the physical dimension, with a visual script that was entirely abstract. However, it was toward the end of his early phase that he started to employ linguistic means to make art. This

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¹⁰⁵ Naumann, 42
new idea of art, namely the selection of an everyday mundane object that could express his anti-art statements by inscribing a phrase and his or alter-ego’s signature, was what he named readymades. However, this radical alternative to the institutionalized, conventional art could not be introduced without its entailment. In other words, without the ostensive statement of “this is art” and Duchamp’s stature as an artist to declare as such, readymades would not have become anti-art. Therefore, he assimilated to Modernism in the course of his apprenticeship during which he discovered that definition for art was a futile undertaking. With the authority to confer “art” upon readymades, which were mundane everyday utensils, the entailment of readymades could serve as a springboard for his addressees to make an inference that would lead them to the implicature, (namely the correction interpretation of the implied meaning,) which was the specific anti-art statement that each readymade carried. For Duchamp to make sure that the intended but implied meaning will be successfully inferred and for addressee to draw appropriate inferences, mutually shared contextual knowledge was required. Since the mutually shared contextual knowledge was so vast, Duchamp adhered to Grice’s Cooperative Principle. In each readymade, he projected the right amount of information, relevant information only, at the right time, and in the right sequence. And when it comes to reconciling the contradiction of the natural meaning of entailment (i.e. “this is art”) and the unnatural but intended meaning of implicature (i.e. “this is anti-art,”) it is grammatical to negate unnatural meaning, or implicature, because it is an inference base on context. Entailment
is not contextually-bound; therefore it cannot be cancelled out with causing ungrammaticality. "Readymades are art. In fact, they are anti-art." In the earlier sections, we also examined the historical events that inspired Duchamp to realize that intended meaning could be encoded and subsequently decoded by the addressee accurately. Although he might not have called it pragmatics in art, Duchampean art adequately served a pragmatic function.

As demonstrated by this interdisciplinary study, there is an impeccable correspondence between the pragmatic function executed by readymades and the pragmatic theories and principles in linguistics. Such correspondence could even be applied to other art movements that asserted themselves as anti-art refuting the established conventions in art that preceded them – medieval art refuting antiquities, Mannerism offering alternatives to mathematical realism, Modernism revering flatness instead of concealing it, the iconoclastic Dadaism that criticized the conservative establishment, etc.

In his essay "Modernist Painting", Greenberg asserted that each art had its own exclusive duty to demonstrate the kind of experience and effects that were peculiar to the art itself through the operation peculiar to itself. "What had to be exhibited and made explicit was that which was unique and irreducible not only in art in general, but also in each particular art."106 The competence of each art was a direct result of the unique nature of its medium. Painting was to celebrate its flatness. The two-dimensionality of painting was unique and

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exclusive to painting; and thereby guaranteed the independence of painting as an art. For this reason, realistic rendition of the subject was an illusionist approach to art that hid and stigmatized, as opposed to revering, the two-dimensionality of painting. Three-dimensionality and realism were the realm of sculpture and "for the sake of its own autonomy painting [had] above all divest[ed] itself of everything [representational.]" Painting rightfully excluded realistic representation and anything "literal." It made itself abstract. Aesthetic value was independent and other factors such ethical and social considerations were detached from artistic judgment. For Greenberg, the priority of importance was the purely formal or abstract qualities; that is the aesthetic properties that gave rise to form: shape, composition, color or structure. Modernist painting, such as the works of Mondrian (figure 28) and Kandinsky (figure 29,) sought the right to be non-representational. It wasn't its responsibility to duplicate reality. Duplication of reality, namely preserving the truth, was the duty of language. In addition, Greenberg also emphasized on the exclusivity of visual art by comparing visual art to science.

That visual art should confine itself exclusively to what is given in visual experience, and make no reference to anything given in other orders of experience, is a notion whose only justification lies, notionally, in scientific consistency. Scientific method alone asks that a situation be resolved in exactly the same kind of terms as that in which it is presented – a problem in physiology is solved in terms of physiology, not in those of
psychology; to be solved in terms of psychology, it has to be presented in, or translated into, these terms first. Analogously, Modernist painting asks that a literary theme be translated into strictly optical two-dimensional[ility] before becoming the subject of pictorial art – which means its being translated in such a way that it entirely loses its literary character.\footnote{Greenberg, \textit{Modernist Painting}, 2.}

Figure 28. \textit{Broadway Boogie-Woogie}
With the examination and analysis in this paper, the conclusion is not to say that Duchamp proved Greenbergian modernism wrong. Rather, he proved that Greenbergian Modernism was transient and incomplete. "Art was a habit forming drug" and Greenberg attempted to classify this habit called Modernism. While trying to justify their evolutionary feat, Greenberg put modernist paintings into a box with labels such as "exclusivity," "two-dimensionality," and "formalism." However, from Modernism to Duchampean conceptual art, the priority of art shifted from semantics to pragmatics. Modernism sought to denounce the preceding illusionist realism. Modernist paintings had indeed obtained the right to be non-representational. They had indeed demonstrated that, through the operations peculiar to itself, the unique effects that were peculiar to painting could be experienced. Nonetheless, Greenberg’s evaluative and descriptive interpretation of such art was not adequate. He should have gone beyond semantics. Once Modernist painting translated the literary theme "into strictly optical, two-dimensional subject of pictorial art," while "it entirely
[lost] its literary character,” another automatic translation took place. At this time it became a speech act; a pragmatic function that expressed a meaning. Every art is an expression; so were modernist paintings. The urge to make a point and its success in doing so gave rise to pragmatic functions, which was a linguistic undertaking from which Greenberg attempted to disassociate it. In addition, as demonstrated in the principles of entailment and implicature, language is not always truth-preserving or representational of reality. The use of language is never literal. The correspondence between the mechanism of expression and interpretation in art and language as presented in this paper has proven that theories in pragmatics are highly applicable to the appreciation of Duchampian art. Such application extends even to modernist paintings, such as Mondrian’s and Kandinsky’s, because their artistic statements, too, were to entail “this is art” and to imply disagreement with the established necessity of realism; hence “this is anti-art.” Likewise, the art-anti-art contradiction corresponds to the dynamics of entailment and implicature; and Grice’s theory of conversational implicature could reconcile that contradiction.

Linguistics is a discipline in which language phenomena are to be analyzed and explained with scientific methodology. As a result of the correspondence between art and linguistics, not only did Duchamp introduce a new dimension to the viewing of art, i.e. pragmatically, he also imposed a scientific perspective to art interpretation. This, in itself, was Duchamp’s way of saying that the discipline of science was not at all exclusive; neither was art
an exclusively optical experience. After all, the appreciation of readymades was a cognitive phenomenon beyond “retinal.”
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